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Australia

FEBRUARY 2016
ISSUE #324

PERTH INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW

TO HELL & BACK

BRETT RUMFORD'S NEW LEASE ON LIFE

GREG NORMAN

MY PLAYERS TO WATCH IN 2016

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PHOTOGRAPHY Brendan James, Gary Lisbon, Getty Images, Matthew Harris/TGPL, Old Golf Images, Mark Newcombe/Visions In Golf

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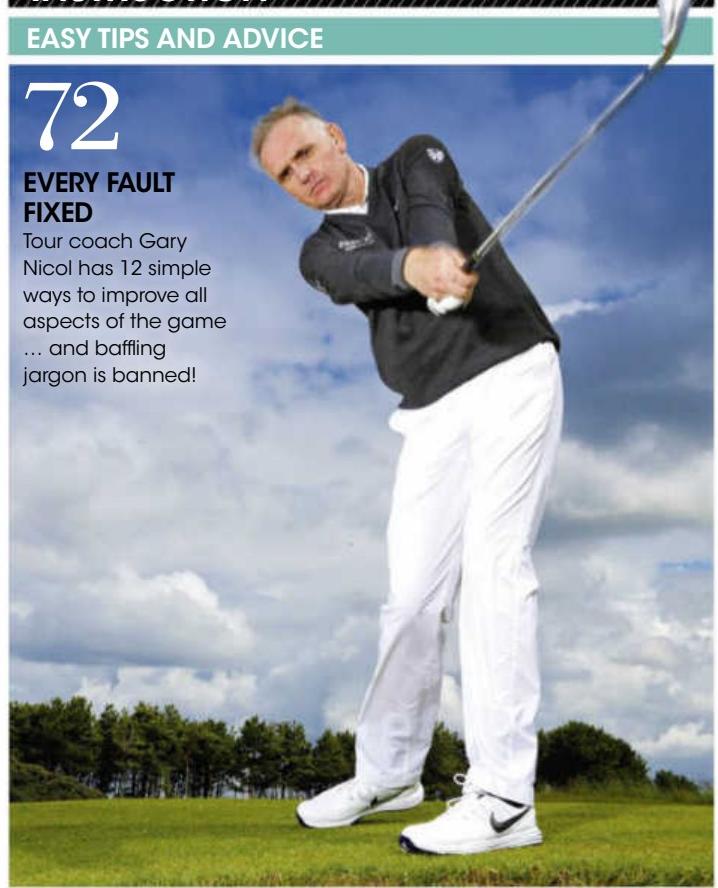
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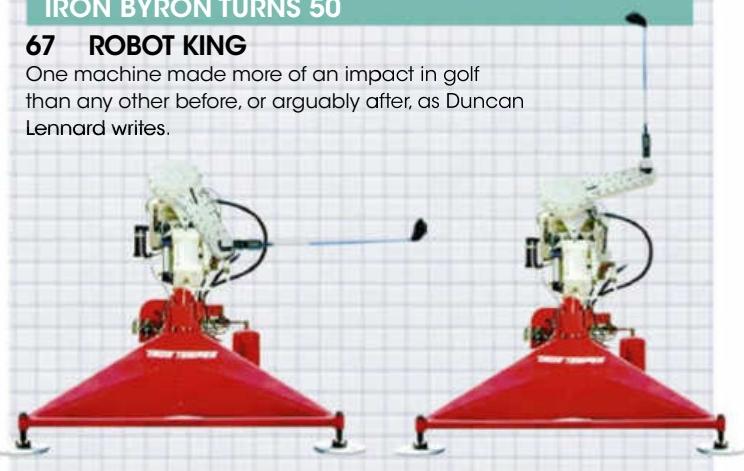
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AND THE OPENING BID IS...

VIEWS are certainly divided regarding the deal announced last November that will see the Emirates Australian Open played in Sydney for at least seven of the next eight years.

While Golf Australia has an option to take the Open away from Sydney for at least one year during that period, it is happy for the Championship to stay and continue to grow in the Harbour City.

Golf Australia Chief Executive Officer Stephen Pitt could not put a monetary figure on the event's worth to the New South Wales economy, but it is obviously generating substantial enough revenue for the NSW Government that it's major events and tourism arm - Destination NSW - want to continue its association long term.

In terms of the ongoing success of the Open and its ability to attract major champions and the biggest names in the game, it is a wonderful position for Golf Australia to be in.

This year's Open will be played at Royal Sydney, 10 years after Golf Australia took their flagship event to Sydney on a long-term basis. Then tournament director Paul McNamee said at the time the Open needed to re-establish itself as a major event after losing its way and the best approach was to have it based in one city.

That theory has been proven correct and the Australian Open of recent times has had the best fields, crowds and TV ratings of any Australasian Tour event, which makes it more than just another golf tournament. It has become the major event McNamee projected it would.

For me, the continued growth and success of the Australian Open begs the question, why would Golf Australia lock into such a long-term deal with one state government when others might be willing to up-the-ante?

Every state government major event body, Tasmania being the exception, has a sponsorship deal with at least one golf tournament, with South Australia now added to the list with their support of the

Women's Australian Open. It would seem these days government funding sits right alongside corporate sponsorship in getting golf tournaments run and won.

The USGA, the Royal & Ancient and PGA of America take their championships to a different venue every year. It can be a logistical nightmare for these organisations but it works. It also adds variety and far-reaching interest to each event every year.

Of course, these are major championships and whilst the Australian Open doesn't have the pulling power of a major, it certainly could be a huge success moving throughout the country if the opportunity was open to rival state governments to bid for the Championship.

There will be those who will argue there is only so much money in government coffers to support hosting the Australian Open as well as another golf tournament in a season.

That may be true, but I reckon if you put on a big tournament, sign up and announce your marquee players well in advance, keep the tickets at a reasonable price then the people will come, whether its Royal Sydney, Royal Melbourne or Lake Karrinyup.

After a successful first full year in 2015, I'm pleased to announce the relaunch of our digital weekly magazine as *Golf Australia Express*.

We have also tweaked the focus of the magazine this year to incorporate more preview stories, facts and figures so you will be able to keep up with what events are coming up and the players to watch every week. *Golf Australia Express* will also continue to cover all the latest news as well as offering views on issues in and around the game.

To sign up for a free subscription to *Golf Australia Express*, delivered to your email address every Wednesday morning, go to www.golfaustralia.com.au

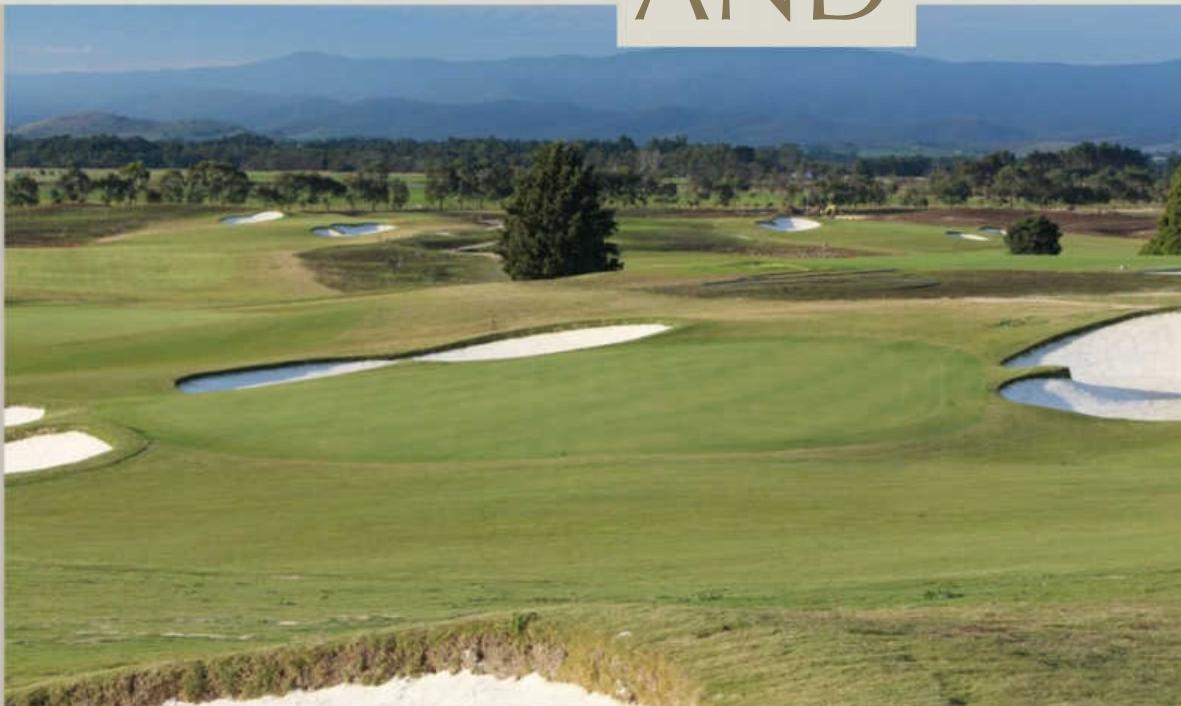


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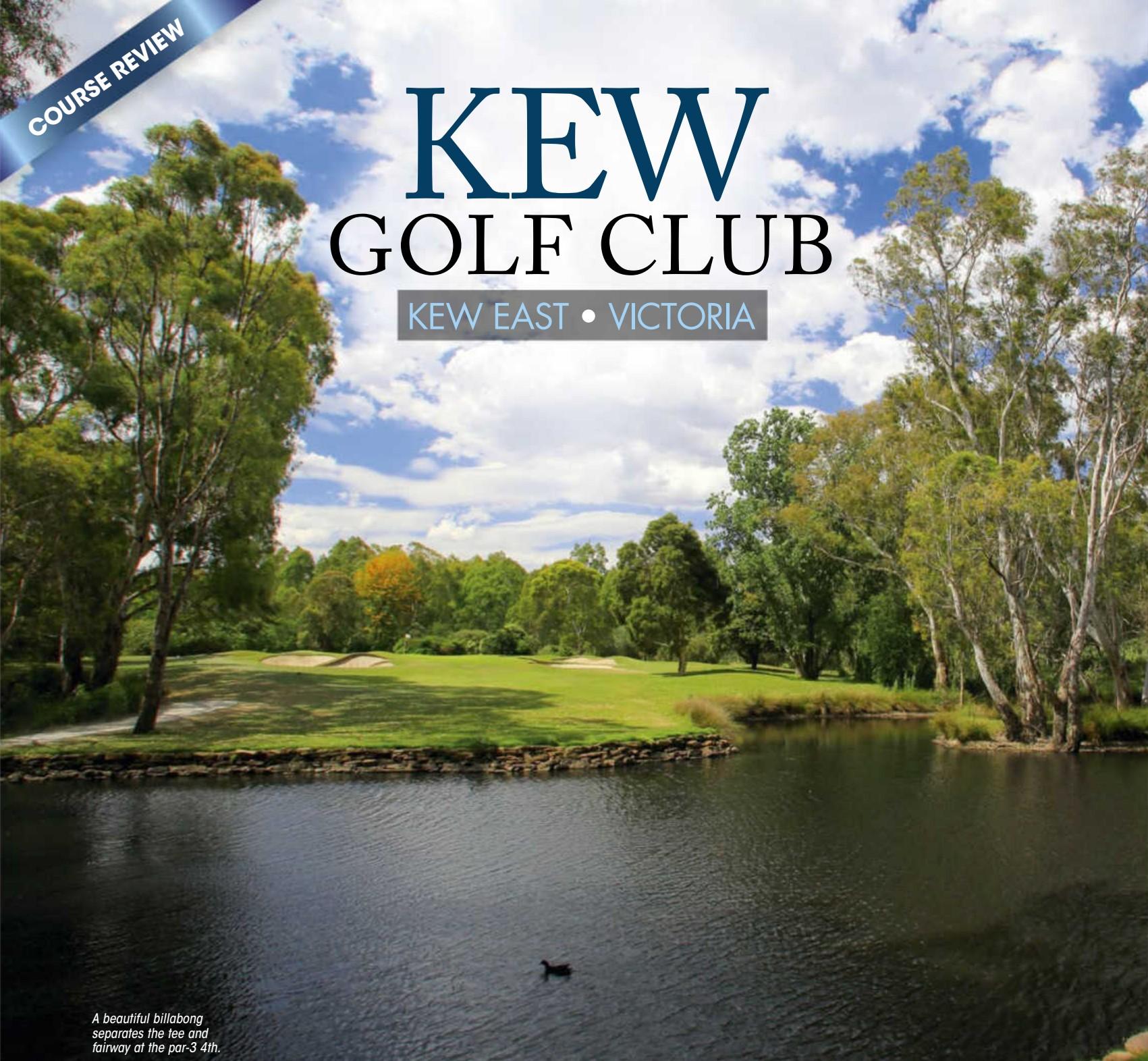
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COURSE REVIEW

KEW GOLF CLUB

KEW EAST • VICTORIA



A beautiful billabong separates the tee and fairway at the par-3 4th.



Some fine examples of Grant's new work – the green at the par-4 17th and the approach into the par-3 14th hole (left).

MELBOURNE'S THIRD OLDEST GOLF CLUB HAS HAD SEVERAL INCARNATIONS DURING ITS CELEBRATED HISTORY, BUT NEVER HAS THE OVERALL GOLFING EXPERIENCE BEEN AS GOOD.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: BRENDAN JAMES

For 122 years, Melbourne's Kew Golf Club has been a significant part of Victoria's golfing landscape.

The club was formed in 1894 and its first course was laid out on leased land about a kilometre south of current Kew layout. Within a few years the course was extended and as it grew so did its popularity as influential members of the community including politicians, clergy, academics and sportsmen – like Australia's first Olympic gold medallist, Edwin Flack – joined the club.

But just two decades into its existence, residential spread east of the Melbourne CBD reached the course's boundary and the club lost much of its land to a housing sub-division. The club bought 92 acres of adjoining land in 1922 and extended its course once again, but urban sprawl would again come calling. In 1960 the club was notified it would lose part of its course to the proposed Eastern Freeway. Over the next 15 years, the club's members endured two further land purchases and major course redesigns to accommodate the loss of holes to an expanded freeway.

These developments saw Glass Creek and the meandering Yarra River incorporated into the layout, which obviously provided the benefit of a picturesque setting but also the problem of drainage.

Kew has long been regarded as one of Melbourne's best clay belt layouts, but like all the courses to be found within close proximity to the Yarra River and its tributaries east of the city, drainage has always been a concern, especially in winter. My first experience of Kew was about 10 years ago and I recall being impressed by the setting but found it a real slog in heavy conditions about a week after some substantial rain.

Thankfully, the club recognised the problem and four years ago embarked on a multi-million dollar redevelopment of their course and commissioned course designer Graeme Grant to generate a masterplan that would not only address drainage issues but also improve the overall layout.

Grant redesigned and built eight new holes – the 1st, 3rd, 8th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th holes – while overseeing the conversion of all the fairways and greens surrounds to Santa Ana couch grass, and the greens to bentgrass.

But arguably the most important work carried out by Grant, which





Grant's bunker designs have blended well with their surrounds, which adds to the quality of the redesign.

was completed early last year, involved improving Kew's drainage issues. An extensive drainage network was added, while above the ground a significant amount of work was done on contouring fairways and creating run-off undulations to channel water to drains placed away from playing lines. This effectively killed two birds with one stone as it has created better, healthier playing surfaces as well as adding to the challenge of hitting quality approach shots and greenside recoveries from a variety of lies.

Kew's new holes have not added any significant amount of the length to the par-72, which is long enough for a member's course at 6.179 metres from the back pegs. However, Grant has successfully made it more testing of your course management skills with the addition of fairway bunkers, greenside swales and angled putting surfaces.

For example, the par-3 14th is 172 metres from the back tees so a long iron or hybrid is required to cover the distance for many, while

better players will be able to go at the green with a highly struck mid-iron. Different shots, different challenges and each have been accommodated into the design of the hole.

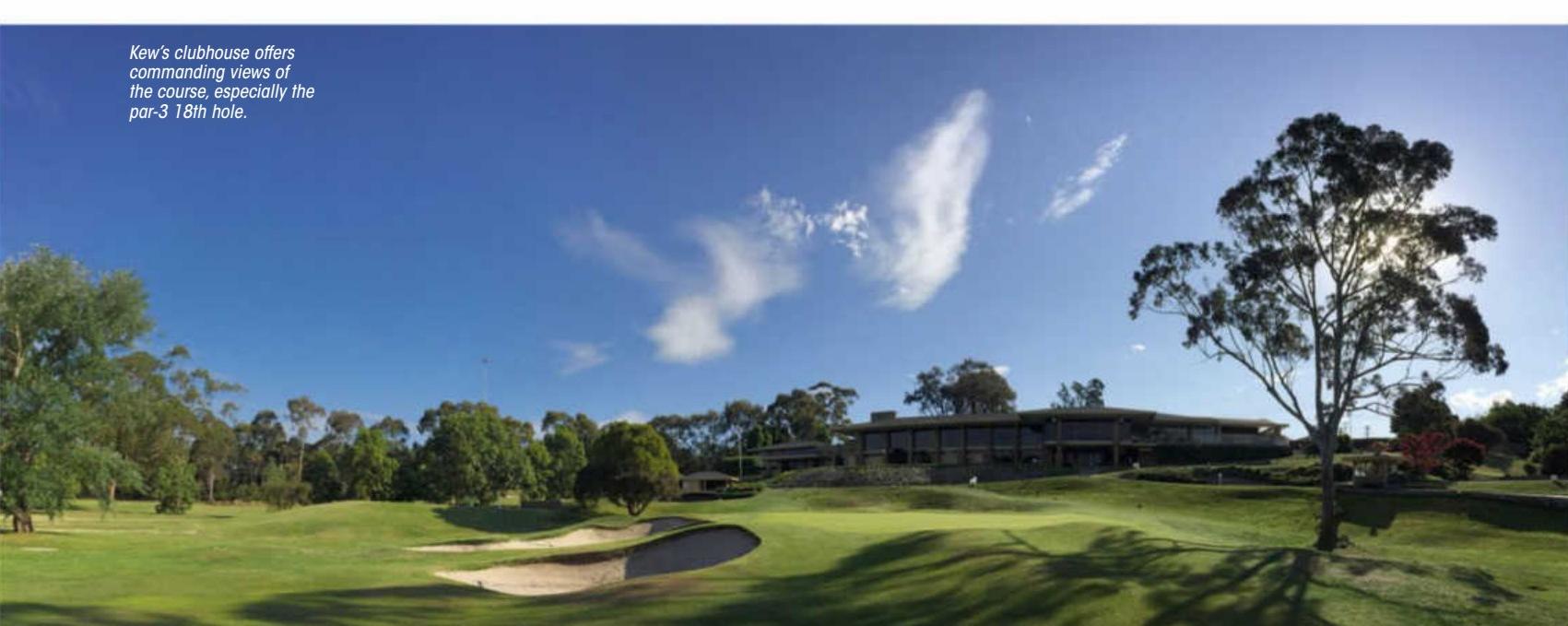
"Like any of the holes, we tried to set them up so that average golfers, better golfers, and the ladies ... all the golfers of the club have a certain challenge when they play the hole," Grant said.

"So with this one at 14, we left the opening to the green quite wide and for players who want to run their shot in, there is a little slope there that will run the ball onto the green. For better players, there's the challenge of carrying the bunker and trying to get close to the pin."

"The green is angled so that any player taking on the bunker, who hits offline or too strong, will miss the green and their ball will feed off into a swale at the back of the putting surface."

The bunker fronting the green at the 14th is a fine example of the natural bunkering look Grant has introduced to the Kew layout and will

Kew's clubhouse offers commanding views of the course, especially the par-3 18th hole.





Mature native trees come into play on many holes like the par-5 16th and the long par-4 3rd hole (left).

become more established as they mature.

"We've tried to leave the bunkers with a natural sort of look," he said. "I hate to see formal or symmetrical lines of bunkers on any golf course, so my work has always been to try and keep the bunkers as natural as possible."

My only other visit to Kew, before playing a round for this article, left me with the impression that despite its beauty it was an underwhelming second-shot course, where I felt like I was reaching for the same one or two clubs all the time and all I had to do was hit a straight shot from a relatively flat lie. This no longer applies and thinking your way from tee-to-green is a necessity.

One prime example of this is the 361-metre dogleg right par-4 15th hole, which is no longer simply conquered with a driver and short iron. The fairway has been widened slightly and two bunkers inside the dogleg have been renovated, while a bigger third bunker has been

positioned further up the fairway to the left. Big hitters can certainly try and carry the bunkers on the right but if they are slightly offline the third bunker will grab them. The conservative play, however, laying up short of the bunkers leaves a longer, more complicated approach into the green.

Grant's redesign has significantly elevated Kew from being simply a nice course to what is now a fun layout that is fair and challenging for players of all standards.

The 'new' Kew now asks plenty of questions of your ability, which I really enjoyed.

And even if my golf was not up to answering these questions with any great success, the walk around this gorgeous layout – just 15 minutes' drive from the city – was memorable enough as I played alongside water hazards brimming with birdlife, of which there are more than 100 species to be found here. ☀

FACT FILE

THE COURSE

LOCATION: 120 Belford Rd, Kew East, Victoria.

CONTACT: (03) 9859 6848.

WEBSITE: www.kewgolfclub.com.au

DESIGNERS: Bob Green (1974); Graeme Grant (2015).

SLOPE RATINGS: Men 130/127/124/113; Women 127/120/118

PLAYING SURFACES: Santa Ana (fairways and tees), bentgrass (greens).

COURSE SUPERINTENDENT: Cameron Hall.

PGA PROFESSIONAL: Simon Angliss (head PGA professional), Vernon Gunson (teaching pro), Michael

Light (teaching pro).

GREEN FEES: Kew is a private course open to members and their guests. There are limited tee times for international and interstate visitors, who must present a letter of introduction and handicap confirmation on application.

THE CLUB

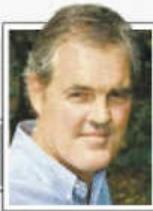
MEMBERSHIPS: Opportunities for membership are now available for seven and six days, corporate and junior categories. See the club's website for further details.

RECIPROCAL CLUBS: The Brisbane GC (Qld); Bonnie

Doon GC, Killara GC (NSW); Yering Meadows, Rosanna GC, Latrobe GC (Vic), The Grange GC & Mt Osmond GC (SA), Mt Lawley GC, Royal Fremantle GC (WA), Royal Hobart (Tas).

FACILITIES: Kew has a practice fairway and a team of teaching pros to help hone your game. The Kew clubhouse is well-placed to host conferences, seminars, functions and weddings.

CORPORATE DAYS: The course is available on Mondays and Fridays for corporate bookings, from 20 to 128 players.



EMBRACING THE RANKING DEBATE

THE ranking of Australia's best courses as determined by the nominated judges of *Golf Australia* magazine was released last month and there will be another printed in a rival publication next month.

Most clubs interested in promoting their ranking will unsurprisingly choose the higher number. When Kingston Heath ascended to the No.1 position a few years ago it was the other magazine's rank. This magazine, despite the poor condition of Royal Melbourne at the time, still saw it as the finest example of golf architecture in the country. One group of rankers clearly put a greater emphasis on condition whilst the other thought the architecture the ultimate determinate of the worth of a course.

Most golfers think the ranking of courses is

Tom Doak's *Confidential Guide to Golf Courses* (first published in 1994 and currently in the midst of a five-year, five edition reprinting) ranked courses from zero to ten based on the quality of the architecture.

You could quibble a point either way on many courses but not more than one and, to me at least, it showed measuring the worth of a course was not as subjective as most assume.

It is still the best ranking of courses, in part because it lumps courses into one of eleven categories and avoids the argument created by a straight list.

Is Kingston Heath a better course than the East course at Royal Melbourne because this magazine's panel has the former at No.3 and the latter at No.6? Probably both would score

or consult to. The perception is there is a 'Clayton Bias' to the rankings. Maybe there is but my assumption is my one vote amongst another 25-odd is not making anything but a minuscule difference to the finishing position of a course.

Maybe, too, there is a 'group-think' amongst the panel but the 2016 *Golf Australia* list is in my opinion the best printed by either magazine in the 30 or so years since they became a staple contribution every two years.

Despite the arguments about 'bias' or from clubs who feel they are harshly judged the important thing is the rankings show off how the standard of architecture has improved in the last couple of decades. Five of the top-10 courses have been built in the last 15 years. More importantly three of them are public courses. Almost half of the Top-50 are either new or significantly redesigned courses.

Established clubs have been forced to look at their architecture and how it might be improved.

Kingston Heath, (*pictured left*) for example, is a much different golf course than it was in 1982 when its renaissance began.

It is the best example of a club understanding how to make good decisions and over 30 years they have created a culture making it all but impossible to make a poor decision. Not all can say the same and many times it is reflected in the rankings.

Kingston Heath is the model for how to properly manage their golf course and any club contemplating their own architectural path forward over the long-term could do worse than study the path its members have chosen. And lest people think the course hasn't changed that much over the years they need to study the photographic evidence.

Perhaps the most important part of the magazine ranking system is they both promote debate and there can never be enough of that when it comes to golf architecture.



a purely subjective task. Who of us are not swayed by a beautiful environment or fine turf?

Only the coldest of hearts could divorce the views at New South Wales and rank the holes alone on their merits. The views of the ocean are a part of the experience of playing La Perouse and it makes it one of the most dramatic experiences in Australian, and world, golf.

Some think it makes it the best course in the country.

Do those who think it the best course in Australia confuse rating the experience with rating the architecture?

Should ranking a course mix architecture with the experience the player enjoys?

The subjectivity is in the experience. The architecture isn't so subjective in my opinion.

'8' on Doak's scale. Is Lost Farm better than Cape Wickham? Does it matter?

Inevitably there are accusations of bias when architects are a part of the panel, like they are in *Golf Australia*. This time four of us - Bob Harrison, James Wilcher, Richard Chamberlain and I - offered opinions.

Should architects be on the panel?

There are reasoned arguments either way.

The other three are certainly good judges of a golf course and Bob and I especially have had many enjoyable dinners discussing the merits and demerits of golf courses. Nothing makes our respective wives eyes glaze over more quickly but for those who love the subject it's an almost inexhaustible conversation.

There are a number of courses our design company have designed, redesigned

MIKE CLAYTON is Australia's most outspoken columnist and an acclaimed course designer with Ogilvy Clayton Cocking Mead Course Design. His column appears monthly in *Golf Australia*. Follow him on Twitter @MichaelClayton15



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AROUND THE TRAPS



BEYOND 40

TIGER Woods turned 40 on December 30. He saw out 2015 ranked 416th in the world, and remains uncertain when he will pick up a golf club again as he continues his rehab from a third back surgery.

Will we see Woods back on course and contending again? It is one of the biggest questions in golf heading into 2016.

With his body failing him for much of the past five years, it seems unlikely now that the 14-time major winner will ever surpass the 18 majors won by Jack Nicklaus – a record that seemingly fuelled Tiger's competitive fire for

so many years.

But it cannot be forgotten, he is Tiger Woods and he has been able to amaze us throughout his career with what he can do. It would be easy for him to call it a day, as Nicklaus contemplated when he turned 40 – he went on to win two majors that year (1980) and famously grabbed a sixth Green Jacket six years later.

The odds are stacked against Woods adding to his list of majors, at least in 2016, but history would suggest that turning 40 is no reason to eulogise Woods' career.

MAJOR WINNERS POST-40

There have been 36 major championship victories by golfers aged 40-plus since the first British Open in 1860. Here is the list of golfers Woods will try and emulate if, or when, he returns.

48 YEARS

Julius Boros, 1968 US PGA

46 YEARS

Jack Nicklaus, 1986 Masters
Old Tom Morris, 1867 Open

45 YEARS

Hale Irwin, 1990 US Open
Jerry Barber, 1961 US PGA

44 YEARS

Lee Trevino, 1984 US PGA
Robert De Vicenzo, 1967 Open
Harry Vardon, 1914 Open

43 YEARS

Phil Mickelson, 2013 Open
Ernie Els, 2012 Open
Ben Crenshaw, 1995 Masters
Raymond Floyd, 1986 US Open
Julius Boros, 1963 US Open
Ted Ray, 1920 US Open
Old Tom Morris, 1864 Open

42 YEARS

Darren Clarke, 2011 Open
Payne Stewart, 1999 US Open
Tom Kite, 1992 US Open
Gary Player, 1978 Masters
Tommy Bolt, 1958 US Open
J.H.Taylor, 1913 Open
Willie Park Sr., 1875 Open

41 YEARS

Vijay Singh, 2004 US PGA
Mark O'Meara, 1998 Open
Mark O'Meara, 1998 Masters
Sam Snead, 1954 Masters
Henry Cotton, 1948 Open
Harry Vardon, 1911 Open
Old Tom Morris, 1862 Open

40 YEARS

Jack Nicklaus, 1980 US PGA
Jack Nicklaus, 1980 US Open
Ben Hogan, 1953 Open
Ben Hogan, 1953 US Open
Ben Hogan, 1953 Masters
James Braid, 1910 Open
Old Tom Morris, 1861 Open



GOLF AUSTRALIA COMPETITION WINNERS

DECEMBER PHOTO CAPTION COMPETITION



We had some funny entries to our photo of **Shane Warne** trying to escape some trees. The best entry according to our judges came from **Paul Scrutton** of **Hallet Cove, SA**, with: "For the Sheik of Tweak things look bleak."

Congratulations Paul, you win a pair of adidas Tour 360X shoes worth \$149.

golf Australia

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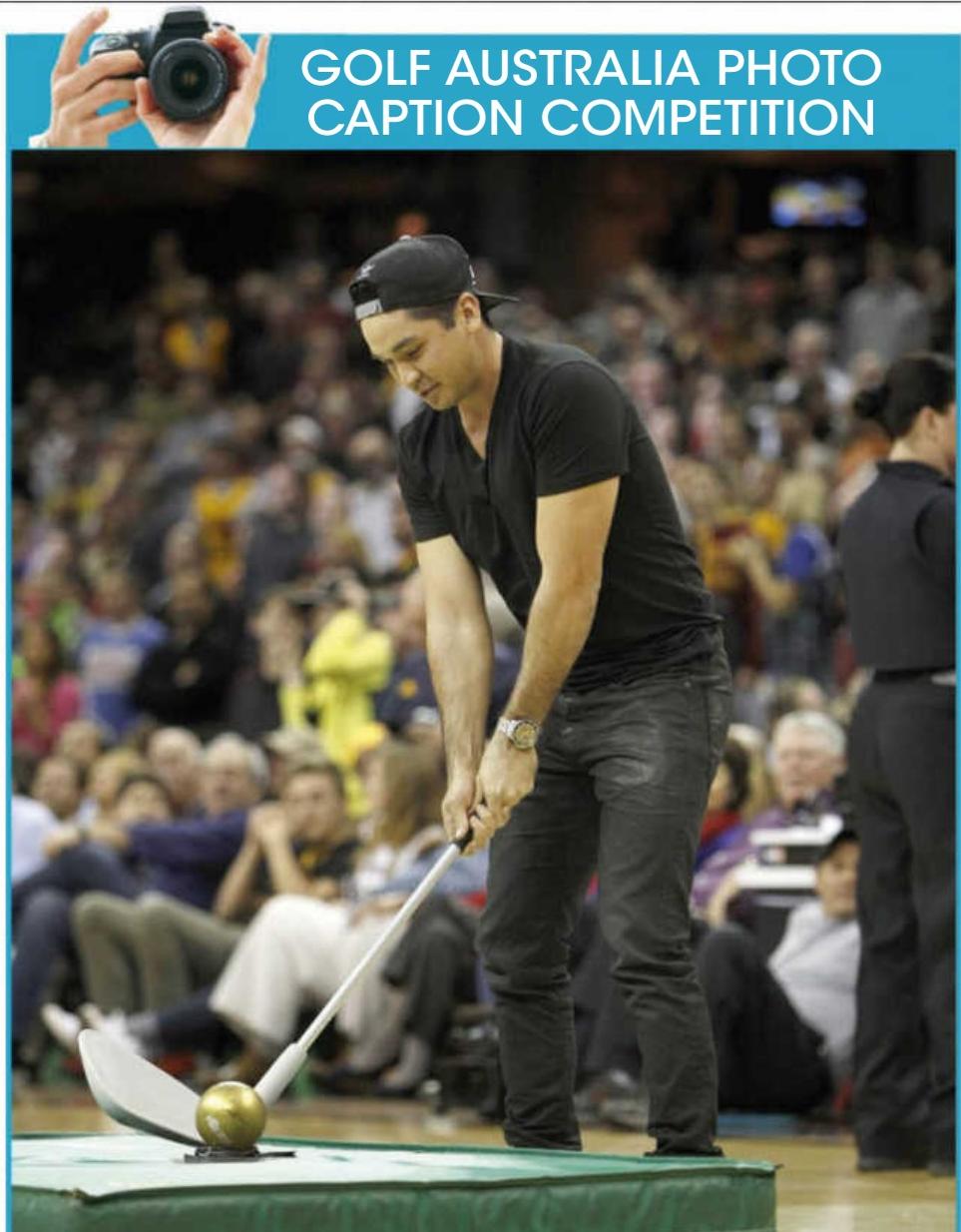
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PALMER COOLUM RESORT

In Golf Australia's Top-100 Courses ranking published in the January issue, Palmer Coolum Resort was not listed, despite making the Top-100 as voted by our panel of judges.

The course had been withdrawn from the ranking by the editors at the time of going to press, which coincided with Palmer Coolum being closed for a short period of time, before it re-opened. Golf Australia apologises for any confusion this may have caused.

Palmer Coolum finished T77 in the 2016 Top-100 Courses ranking as voted by our panel of judges.



WORLD No.2 **Jason Day** and wife Elie made a few headlines when they attended an NBA game during the off-season. Earlier on that eventful evening, Day took to the court to hit a few shots? Submit your caption, on the entry form found on our website (not in the comment box), for the accompanying photo and

the best entry judged by Golf Australia editors, will win a pair of 2015 adidas Tour 360X shoes, worth \$149. The new Tour 360X shoes continue the evolution of the Tour 360 family. With its tour proven performance and stability unquestioned, the new model features increased cushioning and comfort.



For more information visit the website www.adidasgolf.com or call 1800 700 011



TO ENTER: Visit www.golfaustralia.com.au and click on the 'WIN' icon to submit your entry. Entries close **February 24**. The winner will be published in the April 2016 issue of Golf Australia.

WHEN MY TIME IS MY OWN.



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CHARLEY HULL

ENGLAND'S PRECOCIOUS 19-YEAR-OLD TOUR STAR ON THE JOYS OF WOBURN, FAB 4-IRONS AND SUPERSTITIOUS OUTFITS.



1. How old were you and where did you break par for 18 holes the first time?

I first broke par when I was ten years old at Kettering Golf Club in England. I was four-under through nine holes, but managed to finish one-under.

2. Best shot of your career? The 4-iron from around 185 yards that I hit in the play-off which helped me win my first European Tour victory (Lalla Meryem Cup in Morocco).

3. One mulligan you'd like to have? I would love to replay the drive that I hit in the play-off at the German Open. I blocked it right and had to chip out, which cost me the title.

4. Favourite course in the world? I like playing golf in Dubai because the courses are in great condition, but I love my home club, Woburn.

5. Favourite course in the UK? Woburn.

6. Favourite hole in the world? I really like the 1st hole at Royal Birkdale. When the wind is off the left, the fairway is extremely tight and the trouble on the right

makes it a good test. The fact I've played the Ricoh Women's British Open there makes it even more special.

7. Favourite hole in the UK? 1st at Birkdale.

8. What's your favourite club and why? I like hitting them all, but if I have to say one it would be my 4-iron. I always seem to hit it well.

9. Favourite movie? "The Wolf of Wall Street".

10. Favourite musician or group? Arctic Monkeys.

11. Favourite sporting event, non-golf? I really like Wimbledon. I was obsessed with everything about it when I was younger.

12. Favourite TV show? "Vampire Diaries".

13. Favourite sports team? Liverpool FC.

14. Favourite male athlete? Tiger Woods.

15. Favourite female athlete? Anna Kournikova.

16. Any golf superstitions? I won't tell you them all, but I won't do certain things such as wearing certain colours or hats – if they didn't work the first time, I am conscious of them the next.

17. Favourite view in golf? I love the landscape at Woburn among the setting of tree-lined fairways.

18. Favourite holiday destination? I travel so much, so being at home is kind of like a holiday.

19. Who would be in your dream foursome (non-Tour players)? My closest friends – Grant Cherry, Shea Smith and James Northern – because we always have a lot of fun and laughs.

20. Who would be in your Tour foursome? Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy and Seve Ballesteros.

I first broke par when I was ten years old.

"Royal Melbourne, LaPerouse and Barnbougle...but my highlight was golf at Rathon Farm"

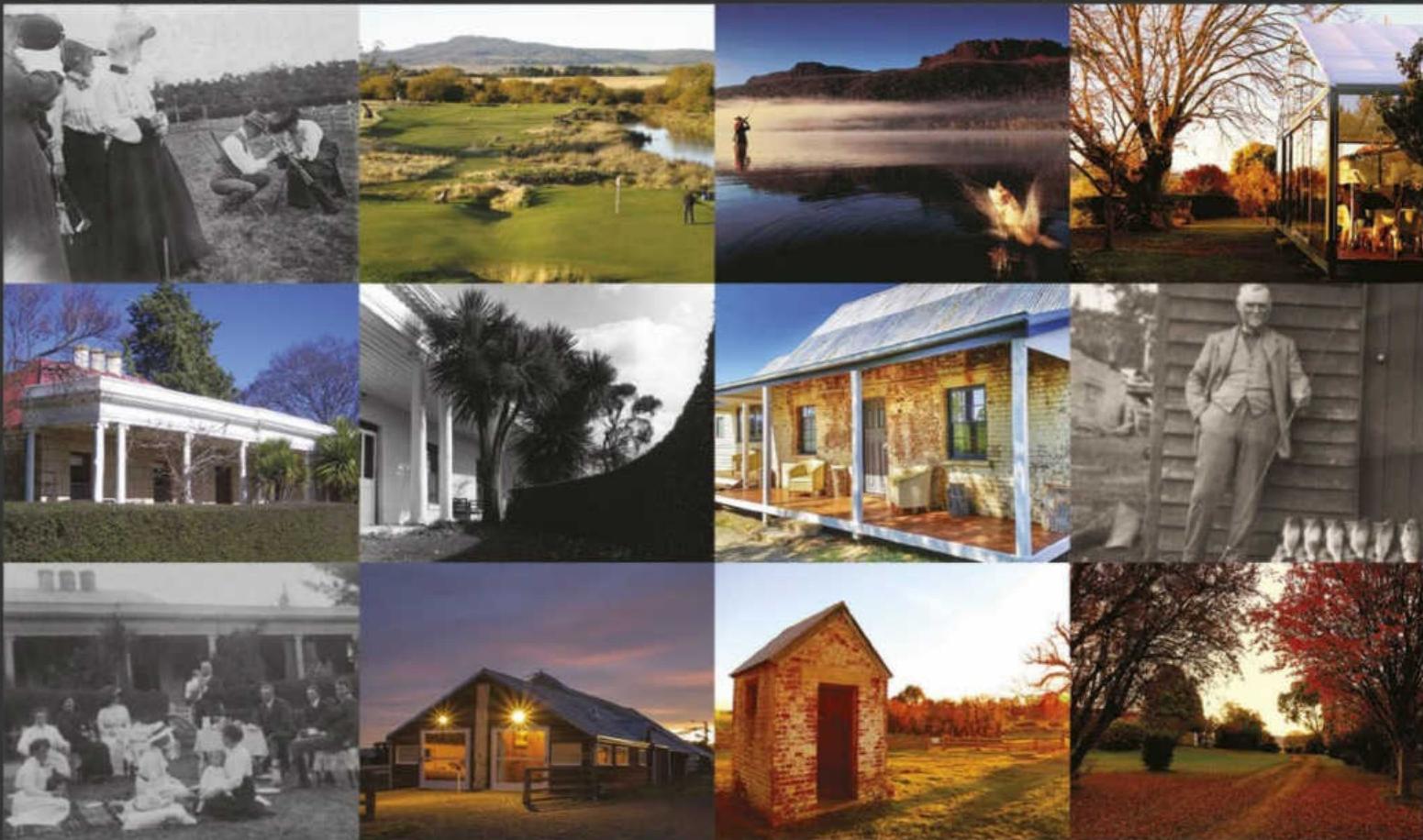
Grant Godby, Texas



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OPEN ROAD

I couldn't agree more with Brendan Moloney's views in his column, *Take The Open On The Road* (December, GA).

I live in Adelaide and fondly remember going to the Australian Open at Royal Adelaide in 1998, which was won by Greg Chalmers. It was a great field of players that included Greg Norman, Nick Faldo, Fred Couples and a few others who were playing the Presidents Cup the next week.

I haven't seen an Australian Open live since.

As much as I would like to travel to Sydney to see the likes of Jordan Spieth and Adam Scott play, as a pensioner I simply cannot afford to do that.

I will certainly go and watch the ladies play when then women's Open comes to Adelaide in February but it would be great to see the best male players up close again.

I understand there are financial benefits for keeping the Open in Sydney, but what about the future of the game? Aspiring young golfers need to see their heroes up close, like an entire generation was able to do with Norman. Youngsters in Sydney have that advantage. Here in Adelaide, it has been way too long since we have seen the best men in the game.

Tony Waters,
via e-mail



LIVING IN THE LUCKY COUNTRY

I LOVED reading your article on King Island, Open For Business, in the December issue and the Top-100 Courses ranking last month.

Both stories proved to me that we are surely blessed in Australia to have ready access to world class golf courses no matter where we travel throughout the country.

I've added King Island to the bucket list and there are several more from the Top-100 I'm keen to see in 2016. I'd better start saving the pennies.

Craig Stuart,
via e-mail

OUR 'LETTER OF THE MONTH' WINNER RECEIVES A DOZEN CALLAWAY CHROME SOFT PREMIUM GOLF BALLS

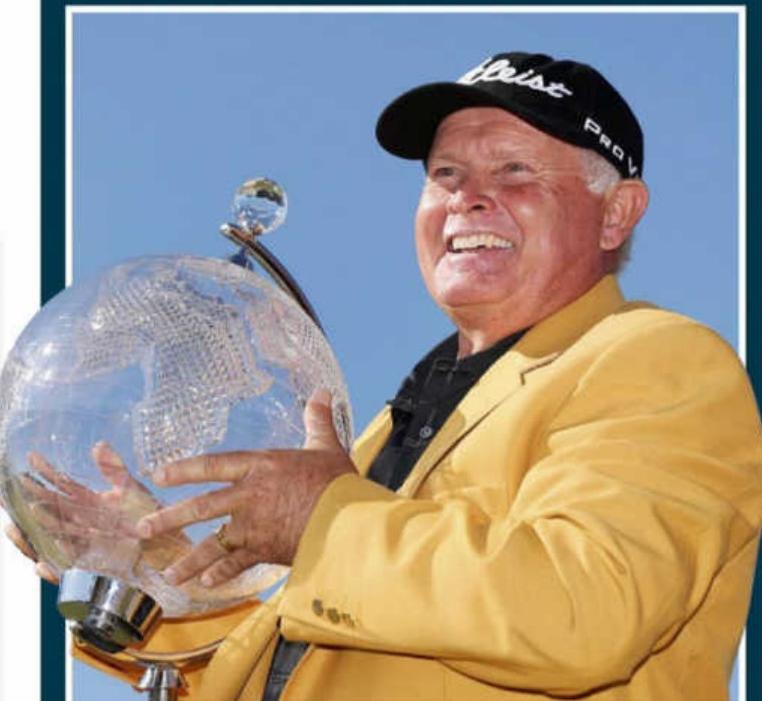
LETTER OF THE MONTH ...

SAVE THE AUSSIE MASTERS

I HAVE been following the banter on social media and read with interest Anthony Green's letter in the January issue (*What Happened To The Masters*) and have been saddened by what many are saying is an uncertain future for the Australian Masters.

I don't want to dwell on the fact that the Australian Tour has seen so many events over the past two decades either disappear from the schedule or are now played with considerably less in the prize pool, thus affecting the depth of the fields.

But we have to keep this in mind in pleading with those with the power to do what they can to save the Masters, which has been one of our best tournaments for such a long time.



I have been to the Aussie Masters every year for as long as I can remember – from Greg Norman's wins in the '80s to seeing Tiger Woods in 2009 and then Peter Senior win back at Huntingdale a few months back.

Sure, the Masters is not what it once but it is an iconic Australian golf tournament that I believe is worth fighting for.

Jack Stanaway,
South Melbourne, Victoria



Want to get something off your chest? Let us know your opinion via e-mail to: golf@golfaustralia.com.au or send your letter to: Letters to the Editor, *Golf Australia* magazine, Level 6, Building A, 207 Pacific Hwy, St Leonards NSW 2065.

Callaway



SUPA GOLF COURSE GETS PGA APPROVAL

Queensland PGA State Manager, Broc Greenhalgh, had never seen Supa Golf played prior to the recent official opening of the Sirromet Winery course at Mount Cotton, south of Brisbane.

Now he has nothing but praise for the course and the new format of the game. "I don't believe there is a golfer of any standard who would not enjoy Supa Golf. We really enjoyed it, and played exactly as we would play any golf course. The equipment may be different and the holes shorter, but the logistics of golf are almost identical. It has many of the components of putt putt, mini golf, the driving range and the actual game itself," he said. "But unlike those other forms, Supa Golf is a real game. It is competitive, inexpensive, can be played in an hour and the equipment is included in the cost of a round."

The Sirromet course, features four par 4s, four par 3s and one par 5. The longest hole is 150 metres, the shortest 68 metres, and the diameter of the hole is 15 centimetres. Sirromet owner Terry Morris, a keen golfer himself said he was delighted with the layout and condition of the course and, like Greenhalgh, had no doubt all golfers, irrespective of their level of expertise, would find the course a challenge. "Golf is arguably one of the most-loved sports in the world and Supa Golf is an avenue to widen that appeal because it is ideal for family groups." Mr Morris said, "what appealed most to me about Supa Golf is that it introduces people to the game at a much less daunting level."

Supa Golf was invented in Perth by engineer Andrew van der Meer and it is currently managed by Perth businessman John Morgan, a graduate of Human Movement from UWA and his close friend, former Australian hockey champion Ric Charlesworth. Mr Morgan said that he was excited at the opening of the new course and overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and support that Supa Golf had received at the opening of the Sirromet course.

Sirromet is the first Supa Golf course to be built in Queensland however contracts have been signed for four further courses to be built in Queensland over the next four years. The opening of Sirromet has already resulted in great interest from other organisations looking to establish their own Supa Golf course.

Supa Golf Europe was established in 2013 and there are currently 11 Supa Golf courses in the Netherlands.

Anyone interested in developing a Supa Golf course or wanting further information are welcome to contact John Morgan or Ric Charlesworth at any time.

John Morgan: 0433 319 428

Ric Charlesworth: 0418 906 217

www.supagolf.com



Supa Golf Managing Director John Morgan and Sirromet owner Terry Morris at the opening of the Sirromet Supa Golf course.

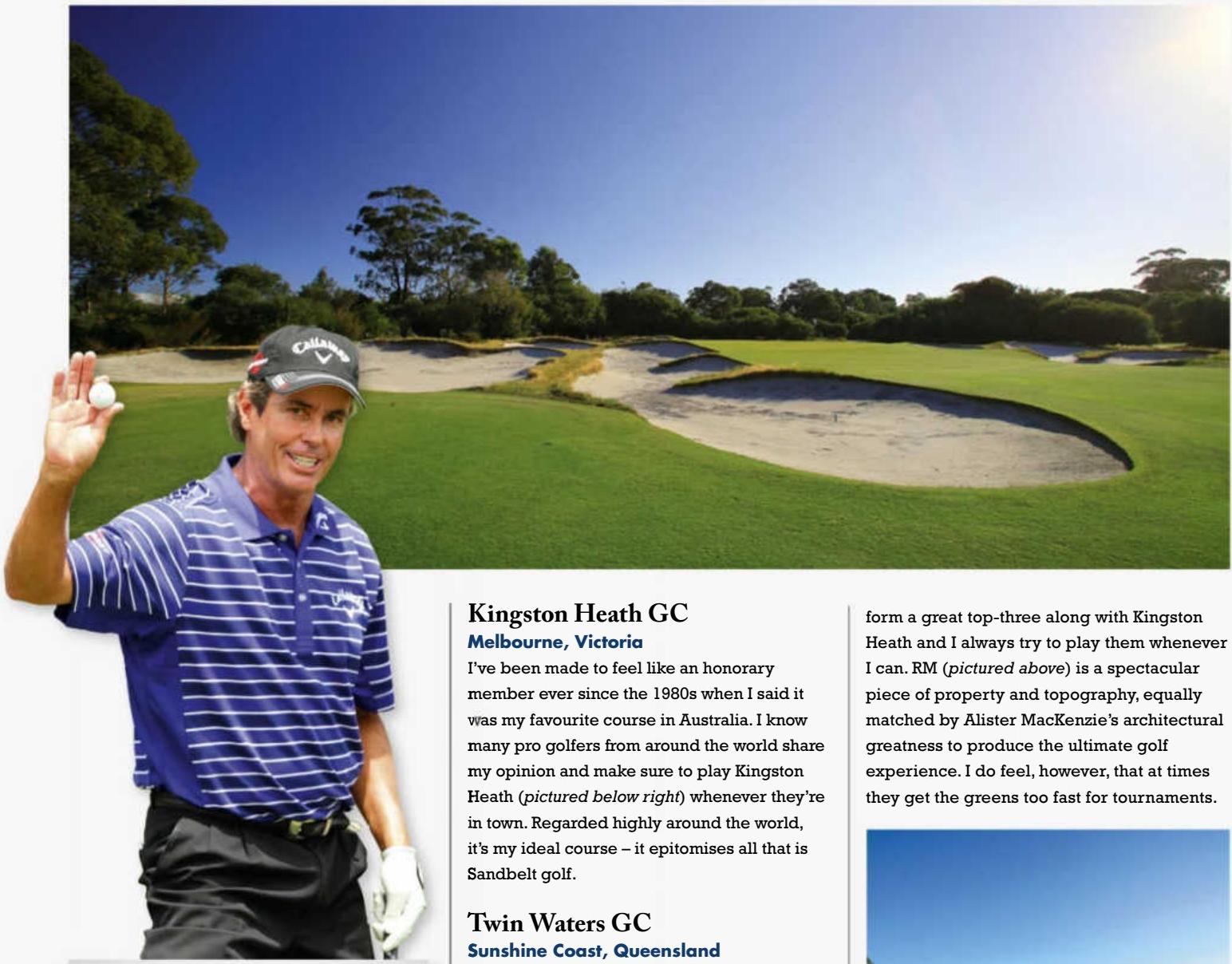


John Morgan tees off to officially open the first Supa Golf course in Europe in 2013.



IAN BAKER-FINCH

THE 1991 OPEN CHAMPION HAS PLAYED ALMOST ALL THE WORLD'S TOP-100 AND AUSTRALIA'S TOP-100 COURSES, MAKING HIS SELECTION OF TEN FAVOURITES A TOUGHER EXERCISE THAN MOST. SO WE'VE MADE THE TASK EASIER BY LETTING HIM KEEP HIS PICKS TO AUSTRALIAN COURSES ONLY.



THE BAKER-FINCH RÉSUMÉ

- Won 18 times on five different circuits.
- Captured the 1991 Open Championship at Royal Birkdale.
- Finished in the top-ten six times at the majors.
- A three-time captain's assistant for the International side at the Presidents Cup.
- Will be the Australian Olympic golf squad's official Team Leader in Rio this August.

Kingston Heath GC

Melbourne, Victoria

I've been made to feel like an honorary member ever since the 1980s when I said it was my favourite course in Australia. I know many pro golfers from around the world share my opinion and make sure to play Kingston Heath (*pictured below right*) whenever they're in town. Regarded highly around the world, it's my ideal course – it epitomises all that is Sandbelt golf.

Twin Waters GC

Sunshine Coast, Queensland

This is my Australian home course, as I reside nearby at Mooloolaba. I play with my wife Jennie and Twin Waters' pro Steve Hutchison most afternoons during my time on the Sunshine Coast. It is the ideal resort experience: not too long and with firm, fast greens, and everything is visible from the tee. That makes for a terrific three-hour round.

Royal Melbourne GC (East and West)

Melbourne, Victoria

The Composite is regarded by many as the best course in the world, and I agree. In terms of Australia, the East and West courses

form a great top-three along with Kingston Heath and I always try to play them whenever I can. RM (*pictured above*) is a spectacular piece of property and topography, equally matched by Alister MacKenzie's architectural greatness to produce the ultimate golf experience. I do feel, however, that at times they get the greens too fast for tournaments.





Royal Sydney GC Sydney, NSW

This is my favourite golf club in Australia. I think the place is absolute amazing. I try to play in the Royal Sydney Cup every November and have always felt comfortable on the golf course. It's a beautiful 'paddock' and an enjoyable golf experience.

Kooyonga GC Adelaide, SA

Kooyonga is my favourite course in Adelaide. I have fond recollections of my Tour days playing there and have always felt the course blends well with the topography, making for a pleasant walk. The recent upgrades have been performed well, too.

The Links Kennedy Bay Port Kennedy, WA

I regarded this as the best links course in Australia until Barnbougle Dunes and Lost Farm came along. I have many fond memories of walking the dunes with Michael Coate and the late Roger Mackay in the late '90s while planning the routing and constructing the course. Kennedy Bay (*pictured top*) has 18 of the best greens you'll ever play. They're as diverse and interesting a set of greens as



you'll see on any links course – even if I do say so myself!

Royal Queensland GC Brisbane, Queensland

I'm a fee-paying member at RQ and I do enjoy playing there. It's the best course in Queensland. I don't get to play there very often but I like how Mike Clayton opened up the golf course in the redesign. I also have enduring memories of playing the old versions of the course in my schoolboy days in the 1970s, then winning the Queensland PGA Championship there in 1985.

Victoria GC Melbourne, Victoria

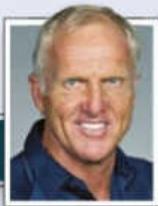
Victoria is a wonderful place to stay if you're a planning a Sandbelt vacation. I always try to stay there when I'm on the Sandbelt playing golf. It's a beautiful golf course, one that's always in wonderful condition with great greens. It's another truly wonderful Sandbelt experience.

The Lakes GC Sydney, NSW

Sydney has a handful of great courses, such as New South Wales and The Australian. However, I have to choose The Lakes, where I won the NSW Open by 13 shots in 1984, beating a field that included all the Aussie greats at the time: Norman, Davis, Marsh, Senior, Grady and others. The greens at the time were the hardest and fastest we'd ever played. Always a tough test in the wind but a beautiful walk through the dunes land.

Barnbougle (Dunes and Lost Farm) Bridport, Tasmania

I can't split the two Barnbougle courses (*Lost Farm above*); they're both equally good to me. Along with Royal Melbourne, this is the best 36-hole facility in Australia and perhaps the best 36-hole links experience I've ever had. It is potentially Australia's version of Bandon Dunes – an ideal getaway for a golf holiday.



A SHARK'S EYE VIEW OF 2016

THE New Year is always a mixed bag of reflection and excitement as I wrap my head around another whirlwind year and peer out onto the landscape of the one ahead. 2015 was a remarkable year, a truly transformative time in golf that set us up for what is sure to be a noteworthy 2016.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2016

To be honest, I do not see any major changes from the top-ten-ranked players heading deep into 2016. The No.1 torch will be handed back and forth between the existing 'Big Three', which will be wonderful viewing. As for the other great players in the top-15 of the World Golf Ranking I would like to see:

1. Dustin Johnson break through with a stellar year. He has the firepower and no question the skills, but just needs to refine his thought process. Hopefully the 'baptism by fire' of 2015 will be a huge learning curve for him.
2. Henrik Stenson needs to elevate his putting, getting it into the same bracket as his ball-striking skills. Once he does this, his

- breakthrough in the majors will happen.
3. Rickie Fowler has shown that he loves the majors and being in the moment. He has no fear or lack of wanting-to-be-there.
4. Anirban Lahiri is my player to watch. He has shown incredible consistency on the global stage and just needs to go to the United States and replicate that consistency. He has the skills and the game to get into the top-ten of the world ranking.

AUSTRALIANS ON THE WORLD STAGE

I applaud the performance and consistency of the Aussies, male and female. We have proven for decades and decades that our small country, with a population that is about eight percent of the US, continues to produce world-class players. This is a testament to our athletes, coaches and golf courses, along with Australia producing an environment that encourages the development of youth golf. In order to continue to compete on the world stage and win majors, they just need to keep doing what they are doing – honing their incredible skills.

When it comes to Jason Day, I see absolutely no reason why he cannot repeat his 2015 season or even better it. His entire game and life is on solid ground, therefore he has nothing but a green light to maintain focus on his goal of being No.1 again. I look forward to another monumental year for him.

Adam Scott will be another storyline to follow. As the season builds to the Masters, I believe Adam will have reflected on whether or not he is capable of getting back into the mix, climbing the world rankings again, and contending alongside the 'Big Three'. The switch to the short putter has the potential to affect him mentally, but he will determine this himself one way or another. Quickening green speeds as the Tour moves into spring will be the barometer to how he is adjusting. I, along with all of Australia, will be cheering for him.

I would love to see Marc Leishman step up and have a stellar 2016. His "coming out" to the world at The Open was impressive and I hope his maiden European Tour title at the Nedbank Challenge catapults him to the

Dustin needs a major to validate his remarkable talent, while look out for Lahiri.



ASK THE SHARK

Do you have a question for the former World No.1?



Adam Scott and Jason Day will continue their assault on major trophies in the new year.

next level. I also have my eye on Matt Jones, who looks really solid after his Australian Open win.

GROWING THE GAME

I am protective of the game of golf. I was fortunate enough to travel the world playing and promoting the game, so if I have one tiny little part in its growth, whether it's in Australia or China, it would be one of the greatest

honours in the game. I would love to see the game grow to a hundred million people, because I'm so passionate about all the game has given me.

While Australia is doing a lot of things right, what is plaguing golf on a global scale is the lack of growth in the youth of the game.

I would like to see the Chinese government develop a task force of experts in the world of golf. Not just the institutions, rather individuals and businesses that have the knowledge and experience on how to grow the game of golf on a sustainable level. I'm really impressed with the Chinese, as they put their mind to it and they really go after it. They are so determined to reach their goals. Everyone wants to see the game grow, and if we all band together in the right direction, we could make it work.

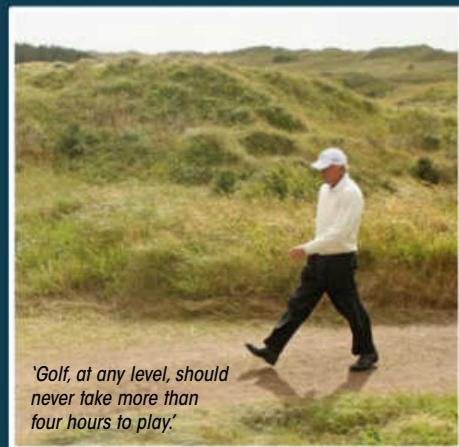


Will Marc Leishman's fantastic win at the Nedbank spur him on to great things in 2016?



Q Was there a particular shot you either hated hitting or struggled with during your career? Perhaps the long bunker shot or the ball below your feet - or similar?

Believe it or not - none!



'Golf, at any level, should never take more than four hours to play.'

Q Did you notice the pace of play on Tour change during your years playing the various world circuits? Was one Tour better/faster than another? What slow play remedies can you suggest?

Nothing has changed in the speed of play. The slowest player will always hold up the fastest. Golf, at any level, should never take more than four hours to play. Slow play is one of the biggest factors limiting the growth of golf, so I'm a big proponent of increasing the speed of the game.

Q Have you ever kept track of how many countries you've been to in your travels? Are there any states in the USA you are yet to visit?

I have never kept track of my destinations, but I can only imagine it would be a very large number. I know I have not visited every state in the US yet, but there is still plenty of time!

ASK THE SHARK

Greg Norman writes a quarterly column exclusively for *Golf Australia*. He will also answer your questions. Do you have something you'd like to ask Greg? E-mail your question to golf@golfaustralia.com.au

Follow Greg on Twitter @SharkGregNorman



A SHOCKING PLAN TO RID GOLF OF SNAILS

AFTER being sidelined with a crook back for the past seven months I am sweating on getting the all clear from the surgeon to resume playing.

It has been a terrible time – 30 Sunday mornings in a row to contemplate how much I missed everything about the game. Well, everything except slow play. No doubt it will still be there. You'd think that driving in Melbourne traffic would increase your tolerance for this blight on the sport, but it doesn't.

I'm dreading the serial offender who uses his rangefinder five paces from the green, where he leaves his bag. Oblivious to the players behind who have been held up for the entire round, he surveys the line from every angle, debates whether it is his turn to putt, laboriously lines up the logo on the ball, misses from two feet, repeats the routine, has trouble retrieving the ball from the hole with the suction cup on the end of his grip, calculates his score out loud, marks his card, replaces the flag and then ambles over to collect the clubs he left at the front of the green.

These antics on each green waste a couple of minutes, adding at least half an hour to the round and robbing it of any enjoyment for the rest of the group. Short of shooting him, there must be a better way. Perhaps he could be surreptitiously shot with a camera and shamed into changing his ways by exposure on the internet, but it is debatable if slow players have any shame.

They don't, according to American pro Lori Garbacz (pronounced Gar-buh-see) who got fed up at the 1991 US Women's Open

won by Meg Mallon. Forced to wait on two other groups at the 14th tee at the Colonial Country Club at Fort Worth, Texas, she ordered a pizza.

"The first two rounds of the Women's Open are the slowest a tour pro will ever play," she later told *Sports Illustrated*. "I knew my group was going to be in for a marathon day when we had to wait 45 minutes on the 4th tee. By the time we had reached the 14th hole, I was frustrated and bored, so I made a political statement. I spotted a bank of pay phones and sent my caddie over to order a pizza from Domino's, since it was clear we were going to be on the course well past dinner time. I told him to tell the driver that in 45 minutes he would be able to find us on the 17th tee. True to Domino's mission statement, he was there waiting for us with a piping hot large cheese pie."

"I blame most of it on the players, not the organisers. Hello ladies, can we hurry it up? Playing in the Open is like driving to the Hamptons for the weekend and getting stuck on the Long Island Expressway – a beautiful journey ruined."

"One way that the USGA keeps the Open genuinely open is by having sectional qualifiers of only 18 holes (the men play 36). Many players enter the qualifier just for the experience, never really entertaining the thought of playing in the Open. When they make it, they are cut of their league, and they're paralysed by fear. The fact that everyone in the huge field tees off only on the first hole means that one slow group can cause a traffic jam of epic proportions."

Garbacz, who won just once in a 16-year career, also spoke her mind when

a TV cameraman got a bit close when she was coming off a double bogey at the 1985 LPGA Pro Am at Meridian GC in Denver. Her suggestion that he "get that (expletive deleted) camera out of my face" went live to air and she was fined \$3,500.

We have a guy at my club who hates slow play so much that you occasionally see him playing alone, a full hole ahead of the snails he started out with. He agrees that they can't be shamed into showing consideration for the rest of the field and backs my plan to shock them into action. All it would take is something like the Garmin Delta XC remote dog training collar, which is currently on special for \$359, down from \$399, or similar.

This is not for the squeamish. It is a collar which remotely delivers an electric shock whenever the dog does something it shouldn't. There are cheaper models for as little as \$50 but they have a range of only three metres as opposed to the 800 metres claimed by the Delta XC. With the short-range model, you might as well stand next to the snail with a cattle prod or a taser.

Instead of placing the collar around the neck of a golfer, I'd place it in the underpants for maximum effect. It could be set to go off if the player was not through a certain hole in a specified time or operated manually by a ranger who should be employed by any club where slow play is a problem. The other advantage of the XC is that three collars can be run from the one unit.

After the initial shock, the device could be used without batteries. As any farmer will tell you, an electric fence is just as effective when it is not turned on. Once the stock have got the message they know not to go near it, although your average sheep or cow is a quicker learner than a slow golfer.

I spotted a bank of pay phones and sent my caddie over to order a pizza from Domino's, since it was clear we were going to be on the course well past dinner time.

- US pro Lori Garbacz





ABOVE: The Garmin Delta XC remote dog training collar could be a useful tool to fight slow play. RIGHT: England's Ken Brown was a notoriously slow snail.



For a pro trying to make a living on a busy public course, the thing would pay for itself inside a week if he got an extra four players a day paying green fees.

Short of a shock in the jocks, the problem won't go away. As Mark Twain remarked about the weather, everyone complains but no one does anything about it. The pros aim at getting around in four and a half hours in the big tournaments but they often have trouble achieving this and seldom, if ever, impose penalties on the tardy.

If anything, things are getting worse. More than 60 years ago Jim Ferrier, winner of the 1947 US PGA, blasted South African Bobby Locke for slow play in a British event. "Locke's opening round took him three and a quarter hours of slow, deliberate stroke-making," he complained in his column in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. "The newspapers screeched about it, and even suggested penalties. It was like pouring water on a duck's back. Locke just kept going at his snail pace the same as ever."

In the 1980s, snails were named and shamed with one magazine nominating Scotland's Ken Brown the worst offender, followed by Bernhard Langer, Nick Faldo and Denis Watson of South Africa. It did not bother Brown who was penalised for his tardiness in the final round of the 1980 Australian PGA at Royal Melbourne.

In the British Open at Muirfield the same year he played with Lee Trevino in the third round. "When I played with him we finished four holes behind the group ahead," Trevino recalled. "The next day Brown and Tom Watson finished four holes behind the group ahead of them. That tells you something about Ken Brown."

One of the quickest players, Trevino lamented: "Just once, I wish I could play behind myself."

While dreaming of a return to the fray and a round not ruined by slow coaches, I accept that the electric shock therapy may not enjoy universal approval. In its place I suggest the more gentle alternative of making offenders memorise Rule 6-7 which covers "Undue Delay; Slow Play."

"The player must play without undue delay and in accordance with any pace of play guidelines that the Committee may establish. Between completion of a hole and playing from the next teeing ground, the player must not unduly delay play.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 6-7:

"Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

"For subsequent offence – Disqualification."

This should be tattooed on the right forearm of right-handers – and on the left for the others – so it is the first thing they see on completing the swing.



Links
2.0



KLIC-LOK



PELLEY IS TAKING EUROPE TO THE WORLD

IT WOULD represent something of a cruel disservice to all concerned if the just-ended reign of George O'Grady as European Tour executive director were compared unfavourably to a decade-long bout of sleep-walking. But not by much. Admittedly hampered by the economic meltdown from which the world has yet to fully emerge, O'Grady and his Wentworth-based cohorts didn't do much more than tread water in the early part of this 21st century.

Tournaments came and went, but the leading players mostly went. West that is, attracted by the mountain of dollars available on the PGA Tour. It has ever been thus, of course. The clue is in the title when it comes to professional golfers. They go where the money is.

So, no matter how often the Old World's finest golfers give those pesky colonials a right good kicking in the biennial Ryder Cup matches, the European Tour has forever been perceived as

second best. Geographically adjacent to three of the world's four most important events, PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem's money-grab is almost universally regarded as the place to play – no matter the sameness of the courses or the week-to-week challenge.

Still, things can change. And change they have at the top of the European Tour. There's a lot going on at Wentworth these days, courtesy of O'Grady's colourful – well, his glasses anyway – successor, a 51-year old Canadian by the name of Keith Pelley.

In only three months or so, the Toronto native has made more potentially far-reaching and controversial decisions than O'Grady did over the course of his whole tenure.

Already, Pelley has made changes to the Tour's membership requirements. Players will now have to make only five starts out with the majors or the WGCs.

The 2016 clash of the French Open and the

WGC-Bridgestone Invitational was summarily dealt with in a way most beneficial to the European Tour. "It was an easy decision," claims Pelley. "You support your partners – as simple as that." So the next Bridgestone will not be sanctioned by the Old World circuit. Take that, Mister Finchem.

Rightly or wrongly, Rory McIlroy's injury-interrupted 2015 season was sympathetically handled when the Tour's star player was allowed to retain his membership despite making only 12 of the requisite (and now defunct) 13 starts.

"Usually when a new CEO or president comes into a company, you have the luxury of sitting back, evaluating all facets of the business, creating a strategy, articulating that strategy and moving into execution mode," says Pelley. "We were operational on day two. On day two I was in Singapore. I arrived overnight at Wentworth from Toronto. I found



“I look at us as a world Tour ... I look at our diversity and our cultural opportunities as our biggest asset.”



Tim Finchem and Keith Pelley are two men with similar goals in different environs.

out where my office was, how you turn the lights on. Then I went to Singapore. Then when I got back we had the Bridgestone thing. Then we had the Rory decision."

Speaking further at the season-ending DP World Tour Championship in Dubai last November, Pelley was bullish about the future in a way that none of his predecessors ever dared emulate. He even went as far as to say that the new global circuit he has in mind for a merged European and Asian Tours – "our goal is to merge and have a combined moneylist, while at the same time merge the businesses" – would provide a "viable alternative to the PGA Tour" within the next three to five years.

"We need to be too important to be dismissed from our sponsors, from our stakeholders, from our players," he continued. "And that means we are going to have to increase our prize purses, so that players don't necessarily need to go to America to be able to make as much money as they possibly can."

The timeframe proposed by Pelley is understandable. If the new chief is as astute as he appears – and the smart money says that he is – he knows that tempting the current generation of stars out of their Florida mansions (and those awful gated communities so beloved of Uncle Sam's more affluent nieces and nephews) is something of a lost cause. The likes of McIlroy, Henrik Stenson, Luke Donald, Ian Poulter, Paul Casey and Justin Rose are not coming home to stay. Not now, not ever. Nor are Scots Russell Knox and Martin Laird. Both, like Donald and Casey, went to college in the States and settled there after graduation.

No, Pelley's targets are surely (mostly) younger men like Eddie Pepperell, Andy Sullivan, Danny Willett, Bernd Weisberger, Victor Dubuisson, Matthew Fitzpatrick, Martin Kaymer, Tommy Fleetwood and Marc Warren. Throw in the next generation of stars – unknowns currently in their mid-teens – and Asian luminaries like Kiradech Aphibarnrat and

Anirban Lahiri, and Pelley will have something tangible and attractive to sell to the sort of blue-chip sponsors needed to make the Euro/Asian Tour a financially viable substitute to Finchem's multi-million dollar boondoggle.

Travelling almost everywhere on the planet other than the US also gives Pelley a gilt-edged opportunity to present a real variety of courses and challenges to his members. A month-long "links season" starting after the US Open and climaxing with the Open Championship in the middle of every Northern Hemisphere summer has an obvious attraction.

Building such a run around the Dutch Open, Irish Open and Scottish Open also has the added benefit of highlighting national titles – South Africa would be another – that are surely more enticing to players and public than, say, "The CareerBuilder Challenge in partnership with the Clinton Foundation" or the "Zurich Classic of New Orleans". These are not titles around which impressive and/or historic curriculum vitae are built.

Throw in a month in Australia playing the likes of Royal Melbourne, Kingston Heath and New South Wales right after the traditional Middle East swing that takes in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Dubai, and the new-look European Tour could surely be the place to be until the world's best head for Florida in the build-up to the Masters.

"I look at us as a world Tour," says Pelley. "I look at our diversity and our cultural opportunities as our biggest asset."

So there is much to look forward to and much potential to be tapped over the next few years. That "viable alternative" to the PGA Tour Pelley wants to provide "for our elite, medium and low-ranked players" is possible. But it's going to take time. Patience, folks. ☀

JOHN HUGGAN is an award-winning golf writer who is widely respected for his insightful commentary on the game.
Follow John on Twitter @johnhuggan



KLIC-LOK



HOGAN'S SECRET ... I HAVE A THEORY

LIKE just about every golfer I know, I'm a bit of a Ben Hogan fan. How can you not be? The man was one of the greatest players ever. He survived a life-threatening car crash and came back to win major championships. And through it all he managed to maintain an air of mystery about his incredible swing. He was one of the best ball-strikers the game has ever seen. Like so many over the years, I have wondered just what his famous 'secret' actually was.

A week before the Australian Open in November, I gained some insight into just what made Hogan's method work so well. Along with my course architecture partners Mike Clayton, Michael Cocking and Ashley Mead, I was in Fort Worth in Texas to look at Shady Oaks, Hogan's home course and the site of what will be our first major re-design work in the United States. It's an exciting prospect for all of us. To be given such an historic course to work with – it was originally designed by Robert Trent Jones Snr – is a great opportunity.

It was a fascinating trip, not least because we got to see all the Hogan memorabilia that still dominates the club. His presence is everywhere, which was amazing for us as Hogan fans to see. His locker is still just as it was on the last day he spent at the club. His well-pressed trousers are there. So are his golf shoes, the ones with the famous extra spike in the middle of the sole. And there are a few clubs and balls. It's so cool.

What was particularly interesting was the obvious depth of his thinking into all aspects of the game and his own swing in particular. Looking at all his clubs – of which there are hundreds – at Shady Oaks, it is clear he tried anything and everything in his lifelong pursuit of improvement.

There was a scientific aspect to Hogan's approach. Everything was done through trial and error. He eliminated everything that didn't work for him. And he did it all over decades of hard work. He was clearly a very intelligent man, way ahead of his time when it came to swing and equipment analysis. There are, for example, dozens of putters lying around: long, short and everything in between. And he even had metal woods.

Hogan hit balls every day, until he couldn't

do it anymore. He hit them in the same place too, under a tree on the end of the range. All his clubs had the same characteristics. They all had flat lies. There was no roll or bulge on the drivers. The grips had 'reminders' running down their rear sides, all set slightly open. Everything was in place to stop Hogan hitting a hook. He clearly saw the

never lost the desire to get better at what he did. We walked the course a lot and you can almost feel him out there. Again, his presence is almost palpable. And on one of our walks we took a couple of Hogan's clubs with us. It was an exciting experience, to say the least, especially for golf junkies like us.

We hit the irons first. As I said, the lies were very flat. And the shafts were very stiff. All of us hit the first few shots to the right, which was no surprise. Everyone does that, apparently. But we figured it out eventually.

Then we tried the driver. We'd all heard the stories about how everyone hits every shot 50 yards right when they pick up one of Hogan's drivers. The shaft was incredibly stiff. And, as I said, there was the reminder on the back of the grip. Hogan basically invented that by, at first, using a piece of string. He placed it off-centre, to help him create a "weak" grip, his hands turned more to the left than is deemed orthodox. It actually felt really good, to the point where I will be trying it myself. I like the idea that I can direct my hands where to go and make exactly the same grip every time.

Anyway, I was determined I wasn't going to be like everyone else and hit the first shot miles right. But I did. And so did the others. My effort came out very low and sliced massively. I had to laugh.

Still, this was one of the most thought-provoking experiences of my golfing life. Hogan clearly figured out that he could use his clubs to direct his swing in the direction he wanted. He knew that, set up the way they were, his clubs would encourage everything he wanted to do in his swing. In the modern era you can fit your golf clubs to your swing. But Hogan also did it in reverse. He fit his swing to his clubs. He used them to create his swing.

Having said that, my feeling is that Hogan's 'secret' was that he felt like he had the secret. He understood his swing completely. So he knew what to do when he hit a bad shot. He knew exactly how to fix it. But he also set up his equipment in a way that made it as easy as possible for him to make the swing he wanted to make. He hated a draw and wanted to hit a little fade every time. So he set up his clubs so that he couldn't hit that hated draw, no matter what he did. He was so logical and so clever.



“... this was one of the most thought-provoking experiences of my golfing life. Hogan clearly figured out that he could use his clubs to direct his swing in the direction he wanted.”

advantages of technology way before any of the manufacturers. He was so clever in that respect. He knew that improvement could be found through equipment.

As you'd expect, the people at Shady Oaks are very proud of their Hogan legacy. Everyone we met had a Hogan story. It was so cool to be there and hear how he went there every day and even into his old age



Ben Hogan devised equipment that allowed him to eliminate hitting a hook.

All of the above contributed to Hogan being maybe the best ball-striker under pressure we have ever seen. Moe Norman was great too. And so was Lee Trevino. But Hogan was amazing. He is famous for hitting great shots when he had to hit great shots. I've heard people cast doubt on whether he did actually hit his drive between the fence and the bunker on Carnoustie's 6th hole - 'Hogan's Alley' - but having hit his driver I can see how it would be possible for him to do it. The ball was never going left. So all he would have had to do is aim one yard right of the fence and smash it. He cancelled out one side of the course and one shape of shot. He had only one 'miss'. And he mastered that miss.

It is fascinating, too, to realise how Hogan never mentioned his equipment in his famous

book, *The Modern Fundamentals*. So maybe that is the secret. But I still favour the notion that his real secret was the knowledge that he had mastered his own swing. He must have had incredible confidence in what he was doing.

By the way, after a few shots, I was able to hit a few draws with that driver. But I was making swings that, with my regular driver, would have produced a low snap-hook. I was getting no help from the club at all if I wanted to hit the ball from right-to-left, which was exactly what Hogan wanted of course. The man was a genius. ☀

GEOFF OGILVY is the thinking man's Tour professional, whose opinion is well regarded by fellow players and officials. He writes exclusively for *Golf Australia* every month.

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To Hell AND BACK

BRETT RUMFORD SPENT MOST OF 2015 TRYING TO GET HIS BODY RIGHT AFTER A LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS. NOW, HE'S BACK WITH A NEW LEASE ON LIFE AND A HUNGER FOR GOLF.

WORDS: BRENDAN JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

March 13 will be a date Brett Rumford won't forget that easily, and not for all the right reasons. It was on that day last year when the West Australian's world was turned upside down, simply by eating an apple at the halfway mark of his second round of the Tshwane Open in South Africa.

Having opened the European Tour event with a six-under 64, he continued to impress as he edged clear at the top of the leaderboard, eight-under through 27 holes. Being mindful to keep up his energy stocks, he grabbed an apple from a bowl beside the 10th tee and headed off into the back nine. Despite three bogeys, he signed for a 70 and grabbed a courtesy car back to the hotel happy to be within a few shots of the lead.

Then came the pain, incredible pain, in his stomach.

Rumford had encountered similar reactions before after eating and had partial blockages in his small intestine. On each occasion he received hospital treatment and was good to go the following morning. With the first wave of pain he immediately regretted eating that apple three hours earlier.

"I thought, 'I just have to check myself in, spend the night at hospital.' Wouldn't be the best preparation for the morning but at least I'd be back out there playing," he said.

"I went to the doctors, a local GP, who gave me a shot at about 5.30 and I was under observation at his practice for about two hours. Checked myself out and seemed to be OK but it was still there slightly."

An hour after returning to the hotel, Rumford started throwing up and tried to wait out the pain. But the pain would not abate and grew more intense, more violent.

"I think they described the pain as the equivalent ... of the male

version of pregnancy or giving birth; I don't know, but it was really painful to the point where you can't sign anything, you can't read anything," Rumford recalls.

He rushed to the emergency department of nearby Wilgers Hospital in Pretoria. Rumford's initial thoughts that he would still make his third round tee-time were about to be shattered.

"By the time I got to emergency, it was basically at the heart of the pain," Rumford said.

He received a shot of morphine to ease the pain before being submitted for scans and having a nasal drip inserted to drain the bile and blockage.

"Anyone that's had that (nasal drip), it's pretty horrible, and it was the start of my many, many, many horrible experiences," he said.

After ten hours in observation, a doctor presented Rumford his treatment options, with the worst-case scenario being cut open to remove part of his intestine.

"I woke up and realised it was the worst-case scenario," Rumford says.

He was hospitalised for 15 days after surgeons removed a 30-centimetre section of his small intestine. After six days at Wilgers, he was transferred to another hospital he describes now as being like "a prison camp".

"Mentally it was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to endure, I think," Rumford says. "When you're a long way from home ... I'm just thankful that for my experiences of having travelled that it happened so late in my career rather than my first or second year. Having to deal with something like that early on would have been pretty hard."

"I sort of swallowed it down and just got on with it. Not that I can go into it because perhaps it just wouldn't be right talking about some of the things, because I'm not racist by any stretch of the imagination, but it's just their culture."

They described the pain as the equivalent of the male pregnancy or giving birth. I don't know, but it was really painful.



PREVIEW





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
Rumford returned to action
too soon at the European
Tour's flagship BMW
Championship; Back in
shape – and in form; The
final rolls of the long putter.

"You had the blacks come in and do the night shifts and some of the whites would come in through the day. There's just not that much compassion or empathy that's felt, I guess, from that night shift to the day shift. It's hard to explain."

"It's very, very – it's there in South Africa and they are very, very, very much aware of it and it's a huge issue, even in their private sector hospitals and it's something they are trying to address. But yeah, it was pretty bad."

After being discharged, Rumford returned home to begin his extended rehabilitation, which was more a mental recovery than a physical one.

"Everything seemed to be smooth sailing and sort of came out of it relatively unscathed but mentally I was just fairly shook up by the whole ordeal more than anything," he said.

Physically, the ordeal stripped ten kilograms from the already slender Rumford frame. Throughout his 15-year professional career, Rumford enjoyed working on the fitness aspects of being a professional golfer, mixing gym work with bike riding, regularly cycling up to 180 kilometres a week. But during his initial rest and recovery period there was no energy to ride. He passed the time by drawing and doing online art classes as well as spending more time with his four-year-old twin daughters, Violet and Lulu.

"It's amazing how there are mini art classes online and on YouTube and stuff so I was just drawing eyeballs and all kinds of stuff just to bide the time," Rumford smiled. "I was doing quite a bit of reading as well and that was chewing up most of my day and

when the girls got home, of course you're just spending the whole time just looking after them or playing with them and that's how the days morphed into one another."

After a few weeks at home, he tried to get back on his bike and it was only then that the full realisation of how hard the road to a full recovery was going to be.

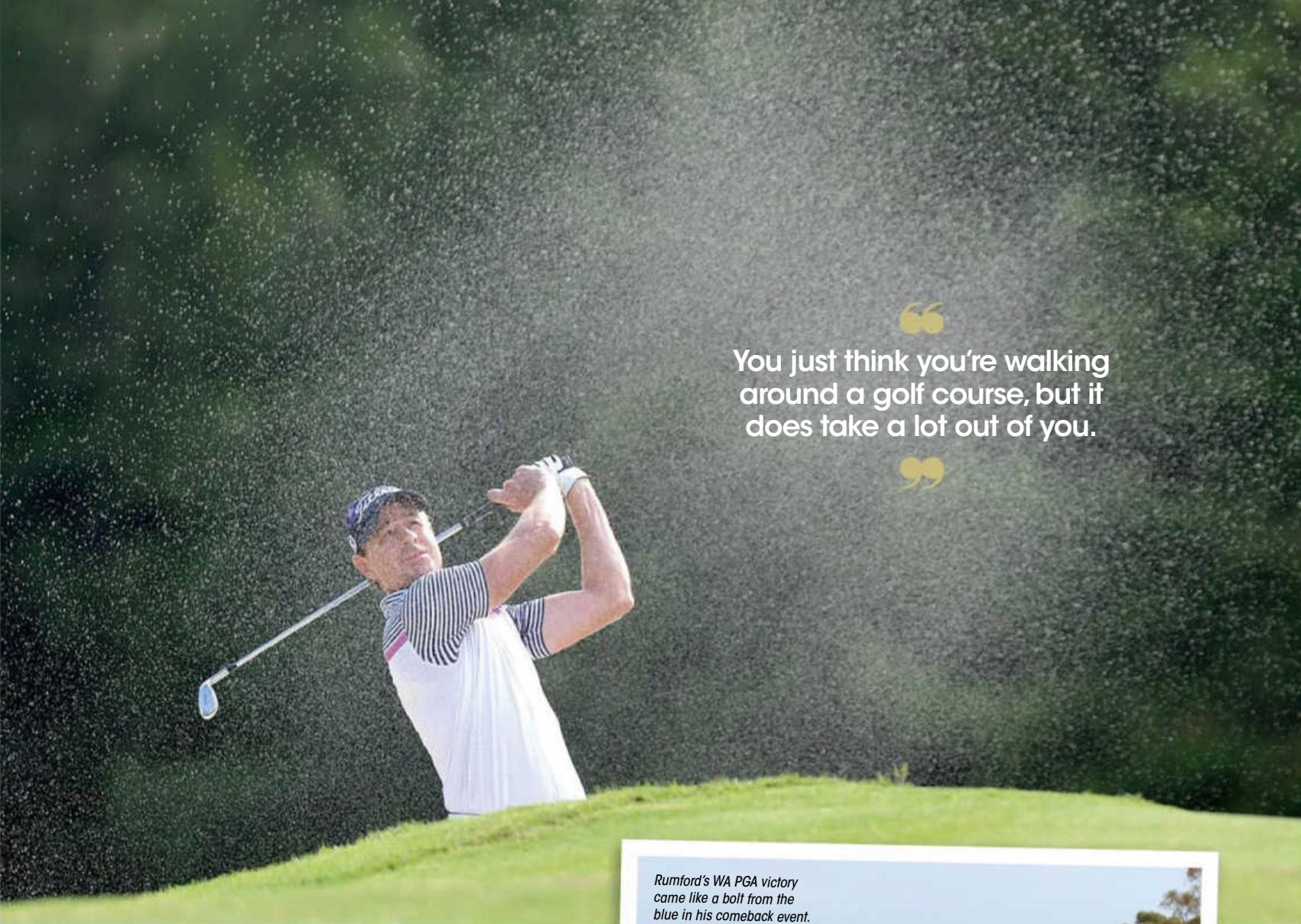
"I was getting out on the bike, trying to get my fitness levels back up again and I noticed I'd ride on a Tuesday and my week was just shot," he said. "So I'd ride once a week and just couldn't sustain it, just couldn't get back up again if I tried to do it again two days later."

"So I just spent most of my time in the gym, just doing some very light recuperation exercises initially and just started to try to get my strength back. A lot of people said I'd put on weight but it was probably just getting off the bike and just hitting more my natural weight."

With some of his strength returning but very little practice under his belt, he notified the European Tour he was ready to return at the BMW PGA at Wentworth and would also play the Irish Open.

"I was definitely naive thinking that two-and-a-half months out of surgery. Basically, when I crossed to Wentworth to try to pick it up and play, that was fairly ambitious looking back on it and fairly stupid," says Rumford, who missed the cut at in London and then was forced to withdraw after the first round at Royal County Down.

"On the Thursday, after the first round in Ireland, I started throwing up again and was pretty bad," he said. "I thought I might actually have had some blood poisoning or a slight rupture in my



You just think you're walking around a golf course, but it does take a lot out of you.

intestine again. Luckily it wasn't."

His Irish Open experience made Rumford realise he was going too hard, too soon so he took the next six weeks off to do absolutely nothing with the goal of still being able to take his place in the field for the Open Championship at St Andrews.

"The Open at St Andrews, I mean, that's a career goal that I just wanted to tick off," says Rumford, who played his way into the championship by finishing third at the Australian Open in 2014.

"I did hardly anything in the lead up to the Open. Played the Open and I just wanted to see how the body would hold up and see where I was at that particular point. And my endurance was still nowhere near where it needed to be to play at the elite level."

The five-time European Tour winner fought hard in trying conditions, where walking in the strong winds was hard enough. Despite limited preparation, his renowned short game and newly-adopted short putter kept him in the event. He made the cut by three strokes but faded on the gruelling final day with a three-over 75 to finish at even-par.

"After that point, I decided to just take the year out and try to go home and rest and recover. You just think you're walking around a golf course, but it does take a lot out of you," he said.

After a month away from the game, his recovery took another huge step backwards when he contracted shingles, which he suffered through for six weeks.

"I had my good days, had my bad days, but my body lets me know when I've started to push it too much these days," he said. "Almost

Rumford's WA PGA victory came like a bolt from the blue in his comeback event.



like a chronic fatigue syndrome where I just go home and do my sleep for an afternoon and sleep it off and I seem to be as good as gold again."

So there was no one more surprised than Rumford when, in his first competitive event three months after The Open, he won the West Australian PGA in Kalgoorlie.

But that was just the start of an impressive summer in any player's language, let alone a golfer not yet 100 percent fit or with a game fully prepped.

He backed up the PGA victory with a top-20 finish at the WA Open a week later, was well in contention at the UNIQLO Masters before finishing tied sixth. Seven days later he had another top-ten at the

ENTERPRISING Scrivener EAGER FOR EURO WIN

JASON Scrivener recognises the Perth International represents a key opportunity in his 2016 European Tour campaign in more ways than one.

The pride of Mandurah, an hour's drive south of Perth, is armed with as much knowledge of the Lake Karrinyup course as anyone in the field and between that and a loyal following of supporters, he will carry a high degree of comfort into the co-sanctioned tournament.

The event also offers Scrivener a chance to fortify his standing on the European Tour. Despite a productive rookie season in Europe, he narrowly missed out on keeping full playing rights with a final Race to Dubai ranking of 117th when cards go to the top-110.

Nevertheless, he passed the six-round qualifying school to retain his card for the year. A good finish in Perth will make life easier for Scrivener as the year progresses; winning would change his life.

"I can't wait," Scrivener told *Golf Australia*. "I love the golf course, I love the tournament so it'll be nice to play at home for once. The golf course suits me nicely. Obviously there'll be a little bit of added pressure being at home but I'm looking forward to it. It'll be nice to have some support."

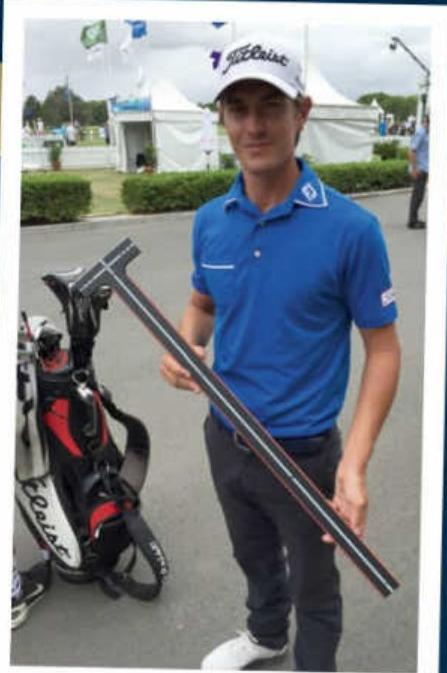
The European Tour never seems to end – the 2016



season began just four days after the 2015 one finished – and the former Australian Junior Amateur champion is aiming to be in the fields of the circuit's lucrative Middle East events en route to Perth. Scrivener has momentum on his side after a tie for third at the late-season Hong Kong Open.

"I got a lot more comfortable out there towards the end, and that's probably the biggest thing [for a rookie]," he said. "It's the environment. I didn't know anyone from a bar of soap so you're out of your comfort zone so it just took a little bit of time. Early on I was just finding my way and learning the ropes, really, but I now feel really comfortable out there and enjoyed it."

The 26-year-old is one of the more popular players among his peers for a unique reason. Seeking to improve his putting, Scrivener crafted his own putting training aid that has transformed his work on the greens and caught the attention of other players on tour. The T-shaped implement (*pictured right*) mostly helps improve alignment. "I asked my girlfriend's dad to make me a putting tool that I came up with and he designed me something similar to what I described. I just did it for myself but then a bunch of other pros started asking me about it and started liking it and saying they wanted one and it just went from there," he said, noting that other players to ask him for one



include Brett Rumford, Matt Jager, Daniel Popovic and Ryan Lynch.

"It's just a very simple tool, basically. It's not rocket science or anything, it's just something I feel helps my putting. It's very much alignment-oriented for start-line and striking the putt [with better alignment]. It's helped my putting."

It's a neat bit of professional diversification by Scrivener, although on the golf course he looks primed for a breakout moment. And that might just take place in Perth.

– Steve Keipert

Emirates Australian Open. At the Australian PGA, he was a handful of shots from the lead heading into the final round but there was no more petrol left in the Rumford tank and he dropped to a tie for 62nd place.

"It definitely feels as though I've taken the pressure off and I'm just going out and playing, and probably the expectation level that I put on myself has changed. Everyone as golfers, with the amount of work that you put in, you expect to see results," Rumford says.

"Obviously with my preparation not being at the level where I think it should be, you sort of go in obviously with no expectation, just going out to play. Definitely Kalgoorlie, I was enjoying it, enjoying the company.

"The bigger the events, all of a sudden, attitudes, mental perceptions change and the environment changes that completely. It's nice to go out and just have a bit of a laugh with the boys every day, and also feel the enthusiasm from a lot of the younger players coming through now."

"Being out of the game for such a long while, you start to see it from maybe a different angle or a different light. It was nice to hang around that enthusiasm once again, the eagerness. It was nice to get immersed in that once again."

The new year has not seen Rumford back off and, after playing through the Middle East, he'll follow the European Tour back to his home town where he'll be one of the local favourites for the Perth International, which starts at Lake Karrinyup Country Club on February 25.

The Perth field – a mix of European, Asian and Australasian Tour

players – will be a strong one led by former Open Champion, South African Louis Oosthuizen, and Rumford will again be listening to his body as he tries to better his tied-sixth and 18th place in the past two editions of the event.

"I'm just going to go through my processes," he says. "If I have to relax up and not do as much work outside of playing, then so be it. But I won't feel as though that's going to mentally be an inhibitor for me playing well."

"I think I've realised that being mentally prepared and being physically fresh is far more important than getting that extra two hours practice in after you finish trying to prep for the next day, feeling you need to have those extra golf swings or whatever it may be."

"I just have to listen to my body and, who knows, it's just a crazy game. Anything can happen in this game."

PERTH INTERNATIONAL ESSENTIALS

TICKETS

Day tickets are \$22 (Thursday), \$44 (Friday and Saturday) and \$49 (Sunday). Concession rates are available and season passes are \$99. Children under 16 are admitted free with an accompanying paying adult, limit one child per adult. Tickets are available at the gate or via Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.com.au

TV TIMES

Broadcast details were unavailable at the time of going to press.

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PREVIEW



THE ALL NEW MINJEE LEE

A FULL YEAR ON THE LPGA TOUR HAS MATURED THE 19-YEAR-OLD,
WHO YEARNED TO WIN THE ISPS HANNAH WOMEN'S AUSTRALIAN OPEN
EN ROUTE TO REPRESENTING AUSTRALIA AT THE OLYMPICS
ALONGSIDE HER MENTOR, KARRIE WEBB.

WORDS: RICK WEBER PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

Minjee Lee will be barely recognisable to golf fans when she arrives at Adelaide's Grange Golf Club for the ISPS Handa Women's Australian Open.

She might look the same physically as she did a year ago at Royal Melbourne. And the swing that has been carefully cultivated by Perth-based Ritchie Smith is pretty much the same.

But deep inside her soul, there's a confidence and maturity that wasn't there last year in her first Australian Open as a pro, when she basically shot herself out of the tournament with a first-round 76 and then rallied for a tied seventh finish. Or the year before at Victoria Golf Club, where she was co-leader after three rounds but blew a gasket and finished with a 78 for a tie for 11th, five strokes behind friend and mentor Karrie Webb.

This is what happens when you win an LPGA tournament and start figuring out how to navigate the LPGA Tour and traverse the world as a talented 19-year-old who likes to watch Korean dramas on her Viki app and eat cookies-and-cream ice cream.

"I've always felt like I've always been quite mature," says Lee, who will line up alongside Webb and World No.1 Lydia Ko at the Australian Open starting on February 18. "It wasn't like I had to grow up. I just had to mature in the sense of having to be a little more organised in the things I do and the practice I do."

"It was my first year out on Tour, and I didn't know it was going to be like this. This is what I

expected it to be like, but to actually experience it is different than thinking it's going to be like that. I practised less but managed my time better. Out here, you can get really tired and get burned out. I held out really good for the year. It's been a really long year.

"If you do the right practice and do what suits you and what your body can take, then I guess it's good. You see a lot of girls out here who play a lot of tournaments who have been out here for six or seven years, so I guess that's what's right for them. I just need to find out what's right for me. Only you can find out what's right for you. No one else can tell you."

Smith says she used to be a bit naïve about the complexities of the world because she was so focused on golf, but that's changed now.

"I think she handles pressure very well, particularly on the golf course," says Smith, the head pro at the Perth Golf Academy, former state women's coach and winner of the Australian PGA's Best Teacher Award in 2014. "I think she is still learning how to react to the external pressures off the course, but she is a thousand times better than where she was last year with these skills."

Explaining the meltdown at the 2014 Aussie Open, Lee says, "I was not used to being in that position, so I guess I kind of psyched myself out. I think it was one of the big moments for me. I kind of learned I need to just play my own game. Just because I wasn't used to it, I was really nervous. I realised I didn't need to be like that. I'm good

“
Minjee
doesn't ask a lot
of questions, but she's
a good observer ...
She's able to pick what
someone else can do
better than her and
learn how to do it.
- Karrie Webb



enough to be in that position because I got myself there. I didn't make any changes in my game after that. It was just understanding that I was good enough."

Yeah, you might say that.

After an exquisite amateur career that included the 2012 US Girls' Junior title, back-to-back Australian Women's Amateur championships (2013, 2014), a third-place finish in the 2013 New South Wales Open after being the 54-hole leader, top-25 finishes in two 2014 majors (Kraft Nabisco and US Women's Open), a victory in the ALPG Tour's Oates Victorian Open that vaulted her into the World No.1 amateur ranking, and a victory for Australia in the Espírito Santo Cup, Lee turned professional in September 2014.

It wasn't a difficult decision. She knew she was ready. And she had the International Management Group and a host of corporate sponsors lining up.

Lee finished tied 16th in her first pro event, the Evian Championship, finished co-medalist at the LPGA Final Qualifying Tournament to earn

her tour card for 2015, then started out the new year by finishing 12th, T-27 and T-7. She went through a rough patch where she missed three straight cuts, but at the Kingsmill Championship in May, her game came together.

Her 15-under 269 total at Kingsmill Resort's River Course in Williamsburg, Virginia, made her the seventh player to win on Tour before her 19th birthday, joining a group that includes top-ranked Lydia Ko, Lexi Thompson and Paula Creamer. In a blistering ten-hole stretch, Lee had five birdies and an eagle, looking positively 'Webb-esque'.

That vaulted Lee from No.59 to 19th in the Rolex World Rankings, and after finishing sixth in the Arkansas Championship at the end of June, she overtook Webb – in the 16th spot, two ahead – to become Australia's top-ranked golfer. Katherine Kirk and Lindsey Wright had threatened Webb's status since the rankings began in 2006 – both reaching the top-20 – but had never been able to pull it off.

For Webb, it was inevitable.

"She's talented – I think you could tell that when she was 12 or 13," Webb says. "I don't think you need a golf expert to be able to tell she was going to be good. I think she's very quietly confident as she's gotten older. It's good to see a young Australian with that confidence, because I think you really have to have that to compete at the highest level."

At 41, Webb is old enough to be Lee's mother. And she has nurtured Lee like a mother would.

"I feel like I've known her for quite a long time," Webb says.

They first met in 2011, when Lee was playing in her first Australian Open. They played nine holes together on the Tuesday. Lee can't tell you anything that happened in those two hours. She only knows that



she was star-struck to be in Webb's presence and feeling even more awkward than 14-year-olds normally feel.

"I was nervous," Lee says. "I think I was really quiet and didn't really say much. Just played and watched her. I was not so outgoing then. When she practises, she's always concentrating to a certain extent, and I was doing my own thing, too. She talked to me. I was playing with older girls so they made it lighter."

In 2013, Lee and rival Su Oh won Golf Australia's Karrie Webb Scholarship, which earned them a trip to the US Women's Open at Sebonack, where they stayed in a house with Webb and observed how an LPGA Hall of Famer – and perhaps the best golfer, male or female, Australia has ever produced – prepares for a big tournament.

"We pretty much did everything she does," Lee says. "We just followed her around to see what the US Open was like. That's probably when I started thinking I really wanted to win the tournament."

"It was fun. I was there and I really wanted to be playing. I didn't want to sit, watching everyone. It was a great experience. I definitely didn't know how crazy everything was going to be. It's a major tournament, the buzz, all the adrenaline. We were right there with her."

Webb doesn't remember being barraged with questions. What she remembers is the unobtrusive way that Lee learns.

"Minjee, even now if I play a practice round with her, doesn't ask a lot of questions," Webb says, "but she's a good observer. She takes what she wants or what she needs to learn just by observing. I really think Minjee is more of a visual learner. She's able to pick what someone else can do better than her and learn



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Lee's maiden LPGA title in Virginia started her rise to Australia's leading female professional after 20 years of Webb rule.



how to do it, and that's how she wins. That was the most time I've ever spent with her. I've learned more about Minjee when I've played practice rounds with her, just watching how she plays. She's a typical young 19-year-old kid. Away from the golf course, she's not as old as she is on the course. She's way above her years in maturity in how she plays golf, but away from the course, she's a typical 19-year-old."

A year after the US Open experience, Webb and Lee represented Australia at the International Crowns team event, which included a victory over South Korea's I.K. Kim and Na Yeon Choi. Webb lauds Lee, saying she was "proud of her performance".

And so the relationship grows.

They don't hang out at LPGA tournaments, but there are constant reminders that Webb really cares. After Lee helped Australia win the Espirito Santo Trophy, Lee checked her phone and saw a text from Webb: WELL DONE. And then another one after Lee's success at Q-school: CONGRATS.

"Karrie has paved the way for her," Smith says. "Yes, she has helped her as a mentor and friend, but she has also shown her what is possible if your talent and desire are at a consistently high level. I think Karrie has been a fantastic role model growing up, and now she is a peer, she is a great sounding board and protector."

Lee has an in-the-present approach to life. She doesn't remember the most basic details about the past and she's not particularly interested in analysing what the future might hold. Prescience definitely isn't in her personality.

But there is this little ol' event called the Summer Olympics. And in

2016 in Rio, for the first time since 1904, golf will be contested. The best golfers each country has to offer will compete on a magnificent course designed by Gil Hanse – carved out of a nature reserve in the wealthy neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca – and has been dogged by environmental lawsuits and land-ownership disputes.

Lee and Webb are virtual locks to be Australia's two representatives, given that as of late December, they were the only Aussies in the top-30 – Lee at 17 and Webb at 30 – and Rebecca Artis (135) and Sarah Jane Smith (196) were in the rear-view mirror.

So, yeah, even Lee has to admit that she has thought about partnering with her idol.

"Webbie and I get along, so it'd be cool," she says. "Yeah. It's definitely exciting, I haven't really thought about it much, but I guess when it gets close to the time, I'll be more excited. Just the thought of being at the Olympic village is exciting for me. Just the idea is really cool."

"I've never been to Rio. I hear that it's very exotic, and it's going to be an amazing experience, just being in that country. It's so diverse and there's so much life to it. That's what I hear. I don't follow much news on the Olympics."

Lee remembers her whole family – including brother Minwoo, who won the West Australian men's amateur title as a 16-year-old – gathering to watch the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics, regardless of what time it was televised. She was always fascinated by swimming (because she was a swimmer when she was younger) and gymnastics ("all the flips and fun things to watch").

"It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I guess," she says. "You never

I always thought it would be such a great honour to win a medal for your country. But I don't think I was ever emotional watching the medal ceremonies.

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*Friend and mentor
Karrie Webb will likely
be Minjee's Olympic
teammate in Rio in August.*

know if you're going to get into another one. I guess you make the most of it and take it when it comes."

And if she and Webb happen to find themselves on the podium, with a medal draped around their necks?

"I always thought it would be such a great honour to win a medal for your country," she says. "But I don't think I was ever emotional, watching the medal ceremonies. I know Webbie does get emotional when she watches medal ceremonies and the national anthem. She always says that. But no, I'm not like that. I'm not very emotional in that sense."

Besides, there are other things to think about. Like winning another 40 tournaments – seven of them majors – to match Webb. Or trying to make a run at Ko, who already has ten LPGA titles, one major and US\$4.8 million in winnings as an 18-year-old.

"My ultimate goal is to be in the Hall of Fame," Lee says, "so I'd better get crackin'."

ISPS HANDA WOMEN'S AUSTRALIAN OPEN ESSENTIALS

TICKETS

Day tickets are \$19 and season passes \$57 (pre-sale online). Day tickets at the gate are \$25 and season passes \$75. Concession tickets are also available. Children under 18 are admitted free with an accompanying paying adult. Tickets are available through Ticketek at www.ticketek.com.au

TVTIMES

The ABC will broadcast the third and final rounds (February 20 and 21) live and uninterrupted from 1.30pm* (*Live in AEDST states NSW, ACT, Victoria and Tasmania).



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H

istorically there are few more famous clubs in Australia. Concord Golf Club was once known as the Sydney Club. On October 3rd, 1893, the Sydney Club held its first event at Concord on land owned by Miss (later Dame)

Eadith Walker. However, despite the courses popularity and the hospitality extended by Miss Walker, there was a strong desire to secure a seaside course. The Sydney Club then purchased land at Bondi and operated the two courses, when they were granted the Royal Prefix. In 1899 the Royal Sydney Club decided to disband the links at Concord but the local members then formed the Concord Golf Club.

The Layout of the course has not been changed very much over the years, and many top professionals and amateurs claim it to be one of the best in Australia. The NSW Open Golf Championship has been held at Concord on many occasions.

A highlight to this pristinely maintained golf course is the 382 metre par 4 third, driving accuracy is a necessity with a meandering creek running alongside the right-hand side of the fairway. Meanwhile, on the back nine, holes 17 and 18 climax the course well as two visually stunning long par 4s that always seem to play difficult.

The course places a premium on accuracy on both tee and approach shots. The kikuyu grassed fairways have distinct targets to assist the player with the next shot. If you miss the fairway, many of the greens are raised-up, making recovery shots difficult. To further complicate things, very few of the greens offer a flat putt; but you can take solace in knowing Concord is renowned for having some of the best-conditioned greens year round in Australia.

To score well here, you need to have all aspects of your game on song. A good day with the driver will be fruitless if you can't negotiate the greens. Likewise, if you get hot with the flat stick,

it will be in vain if you haven't been finding the fairway.

Like most traditional layouts, Concord's charm lies in its more subtle challenges. Standing on the tee, you won't be faced with the prospect of intimidating water carries or cringe worthy rough. Instead, stringent fairways await, where 10 metres either way could mean the difference between a second shot seeking a green in regulation or a sideways chip out.

Concord has hosted a number of championship golf tournaments over the years. It has also recently introduced a number of new membership categories for all golfers, from devoted weekly competitor to the time-poor contender wanting to get a game in after work or perhaps on a Sunday afternoon. There is now a membership category to suit individual circumstances with attractive subscription and entrance fee options. To get to know the Club and to understand the many pathways to membership, please contact the Membership Manager.



PAR: 71 | **LENGTH:** 6185 metres | **COST:** No access for public play, unless playing with a member

MEMBERSHIP: Details upon request | **WEBSITE:** concordgolfclub.com.au | **CONTACT NUMBER:** 02 9743 6111

OH so good

SU OH HAS SPECIAL MOTIVATION TO DEFEND HER RACV LADIES MASTERS THIS MONTH. HER 83-YEAR-OLD GRANDMOTHER GOT PRETTY EXCITED WATCHING LAST YEAR'S VICTORY ON KOREAN TV BUT, HAVING TUNED IN TO THE GOLF EVERY WEEK SINCE, SHE WANTS TO KNOW WHEN SHE'LL GET TO SEE HER GRANDDAUGHTER ON TELEVISION AGAIN.

WORDS: ROD MORRI
PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

It would be hard to imagine a faster start to a professional career than the one Su Oh made in 2015.

The then-18-year-old teed up for the first time as a card-carrying member of the ALPG on January 29 at the Castle Hill Pro-am in Sydney, where she shot a respectable one-under 73 to finish equal fifth.

Over her next nine rounds, however, Oh showed a glimpse of the talent many still believe will take her to the top of the game.

The day after her debut, at nearby Pennant Hills Golf Club, Oh signed for a round of six-under 67 to get into a play-off in her second pro-am but lost to American Beth Allen. Eight days later she finished runner-up at the Vic Open, her first four-round tournament, at ten-under for the week.

Bogeys at each of the last three holes had cost her a chance at Thirteenth Beach, a finish that had some wondering if there was perhaps a weakness under pressure to be concerned about.

Fast-forward a week and those doubts were put to bed in the most emphatic fashion imaginable. Oh birdied each of the last four holes at the RACV Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast to win the RACV Ladies Masters by three shots from an impressive supporting cast.



PREVIEW





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: En route to a runner-up finish in 2014 at Royal Pines; collecting the trophy, the plaudits and a big hug from her dad after winning the Ladies Masters in 2015.



Sharing second behind the teenager were fellow teen and Solheim Cup star Charley Hull, former Ladies Masters champion Katherine Kirk and seasoned English professional Florentyna Parker.

In just three weeks of employment, Oh had pocketed \$77,900 – but, as if to prove her tender years, she didn't even have her own bank account yet.

"When I joined the ALPG they needed bank account details to transfer funds into but I'd never had one so I had to give them my dad's," she says with a laugh. "We got it sorted out pretty quickly but for the first couple of weeks all the money went into his account."

Oh's name, and game, weren't a revelation to those who follow golf closely, but even for one so talented it was an admittedly fast start. As an equal member of the great triumvirate of teen women who dominated the amateur scene the previous five years – in company with West Australian Minjee Lee and Kiwi Lydia Ko – expectations were always going to be high for Oh when she made the leap to the

pay-for-play ranks.

Although only 18 she had already been a factor at significant events – both amateur and professional – for a number of years. She first qualified for the Women's Australian Open in 2009 at the age of 12 and at 16 finished runner-up at the Ladies Masters. When she arrived at Royal Melbourne the day after her Royal Pines triumph, it was to tee up in the national championship for the seventh time before her 19th birthday.

"I suppose the transition to being a professional, especially here in Australia, wasn't that difficult for me because I'd played the events so many times before and I was very familiar with everything," she says.

"It was a little different when I went overseas, though. I learnt a lot about myself and the best way for me to prepare. I had to learn how to practise on the road, which was a huge lesson. I'd always practised the same way at home because I was familiar with the facilities and



In 2015, I really learned to grind. I wasn't playing well and everything was unfamiliar and I felt like I had to learn the game all over again.

the course. But being on the road was totally different and I had to experiment with a lot of things."

After such a blistering start, Oh's results since winning at Royal Pines look somewhat ordinary. Having missed her card at LPGA Q-School as an amateur in 2014, she elected to play the secondary Symetra Tour in the US in 2015 rather than head to Europe where she had privileges thanks to her Masters win.

As with men's golf, the most direct route to the American women's circuit is via the affiliated secondary Tour and Oh liked her chances of advancing that way. But after 13 starts, five missed cuts, one disqualification and just two top-tens, it looked, from the outside at least, like a lost season.

"It was a grind [last] year," says Oh. "In 2015, I really learned to grind. I wasn't playing well and everything was unfamiliar and I felt like I had to learn the game all over again almost every week I played."

So how would she rate her performance?

"Hmmm ... out of 10, probably 7.5, I think.

"The start of the year was really good, the middle of the year was terrible and the end of the year was a bit better, so all up I think that's about right.

"If I look back at it, I won a tournament in my first year as a professional so that's a pretty good start and I've got a lot of years ahead of me!"

Not yet 20, Oh is right about having plenty of time but in a world where good friend and long-time rival Ko is the world's top-ranked player at 18, it doesn't always seem that way. Lee, who was part of the three-way battle for amateur supremacy with Ko and Oh for several years, has also forged ahead with an LPGA victory in her rookie season.

Also 19, Lee is ranked 17th in the world against Oh's 208th but Oh says she doesn't feel any pressure to keep up.

"We don't see each other that much because we're all so busy but it's always good to catch up with Lydia and Minjee, we're all pretty good friends," Oh said. "We talk about golf a bit but mostly other stuff. We all sort of know what each other has done in golf so it's nice to talk about other things.

"Lydia's been helping me with finding a place to practise in the States when I'm there and some advice on where to maybe set up a base, which I didn't have this year. They're both amazing players obviously and it's good to see them having success and I'm genuinely happy for them. But I'd like to join them this year as well!"

Having gained limited status for the LPGA in 2016 via the qualifying school in December, Oh knows she will have a chance to earn her way to the major leagues this year and is ready for the challenge. Lessons learned in 2015 about life on the road will be put to good use but before any of that there is an Australian summer to be played.

"They're two huge weeks for me in Adelaide and Queensland, for different reasons," she says.

"Obviously the Open has the LPGA connection and a good week there could really kick-start the year for me. But going back to Royal Pines will be really special. I feel like I didn't really get time to enjoy what I'd achieved last year and I really want to savour things this year.

"It all happened so fast on





“
It’s what patience is, really. Just learning to accept that you can only do your best and the results are something separate to the work you put in.
”

Sunday last year. There was a big rush after I signed my scorecard because TV was running out of time, then after I’d done the media we were straight to the airport and on a plane back to Melbourne.

“I think it was only about an hour-and-a-half between holing the last putt and sitting down on the plane. It was a real whirlwind.”

And another important lesson. Twelve months on, Oh has gained an understanding that despite how things started for her, golf doesn’t always give.

In a game where Jack Nicklaus had a winning average of just 16 per cent, and Tiger Woods’ 23 per cent is considered untouchable, you need to learn to lose a lot more than win.

“I really learnt that,” Oh said. “You can only do what you can do in golf and just because you want to make birdies doesn’t mean you will and just because you want to win every week doesn’t mean you will.”

“It’s what patience is, really. Just learning to accept that you can only do your best and the results are something separate to the work you put in.”

When she was a little girl Oh remembers playing her first official competition and winning a pink ball for some achievement she has long since forgotten. As it turns out, it might have been a pivotal moment in her development.

“I think I got hooked on the prizes,” she says with a laugh looking back.

Professional golf is no different and while fans marvel at the money in the game, particularly for the top men, the players themselves are far more focused on the trophies.

“You don’t get to win that much as a pro so it’s a really big deal

when you do,” says Oh. “I kind of wish I’d known that last year at Royal Pines. I might have stayed around a bit longer on the Sunday just to soak it up a bit more.”

Not that the feat was quickly forgotten by any means. Oh says she was astounded at the number of people who made a point of congratulating her.

“It was unbelievable at Royal Melbourne on the Monday and Tuesday,” she says. “People I’d never met before were coming up to me to say well done.”

“It was so nice. I was just saying ‘Thank you’ every five seconds.” It’s a scenario she’d like to repeat this year. Twelve months older and wiser, she might be able to appreciate the achievement a bit more. Not to mention it would make one elderly lady in Korea very happy. And there’s nothing Su Oh would like more than for her grandmother to see her on TV again.

RACV LADIES MASTERS ESSENTIALS

TICKETS

Day tickets are \$25 and season passes \$70. Children under 18 are admitted free with an accompanying paying adult. Tickets are available at the gate or via Ticketek at www.ticketek.com.au

TV TIMES

The ABC will broadcast the third and final rounds (February 27 and 28) live and uninterrupted from 1.30pm* (*Live in AEDST states NSW, ACT, Victoria and Tasmania).



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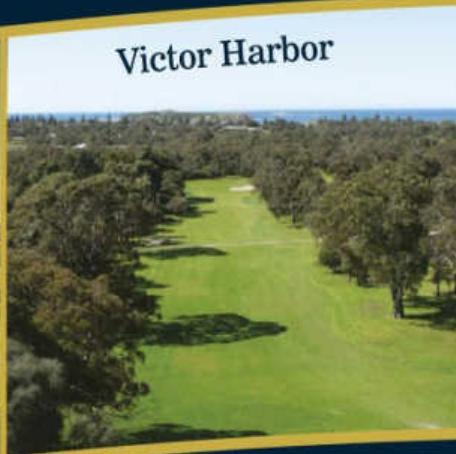
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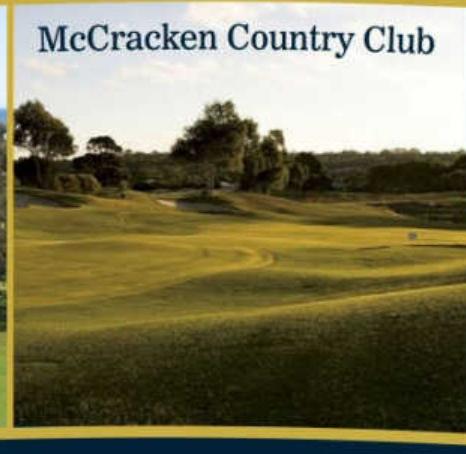
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FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

THE TOP OF THE WORLD RANKINGS HAS BEEN MORE VOLATILE THAN EVER BEFORE IN RECENT MONTHS. DENIS HURLEY INVESTIGATES HOW THE SYSTEM DECIDES THE WORLD'S BEST PLAYER.

McILROY

McILROY REIGNS
By August 9, he's been No.1 for 52 consecutive weeks, but he hasn't played since the US Open due to an ankle injury.

SPIETH

DAY'S FIRST MAJOR
The Aussie holds off Spieth in the PGA Championship to go from No.5 to third in the world.

SPIETH OVERTAKES

The American moves to the top of the world rankings for the first time with his runner-up finish at the US PGA Championship.

1

1

1

1

2

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2

2

A TOPSY-TURVY FORTNIGHT

McIlroy regains the top spot, even though he isn't playing, when Spieth misses the cut at The Barclays. Spieth retakes the summit the next week despite another MC to McIlroy's T-29.

ANOTHER BIG WIN

Day wins the The Barclays in the FedEx Cup Playoffs to close the gap to McIlroy to just 0.9 of a point.

3

3

3

3

9 AUG

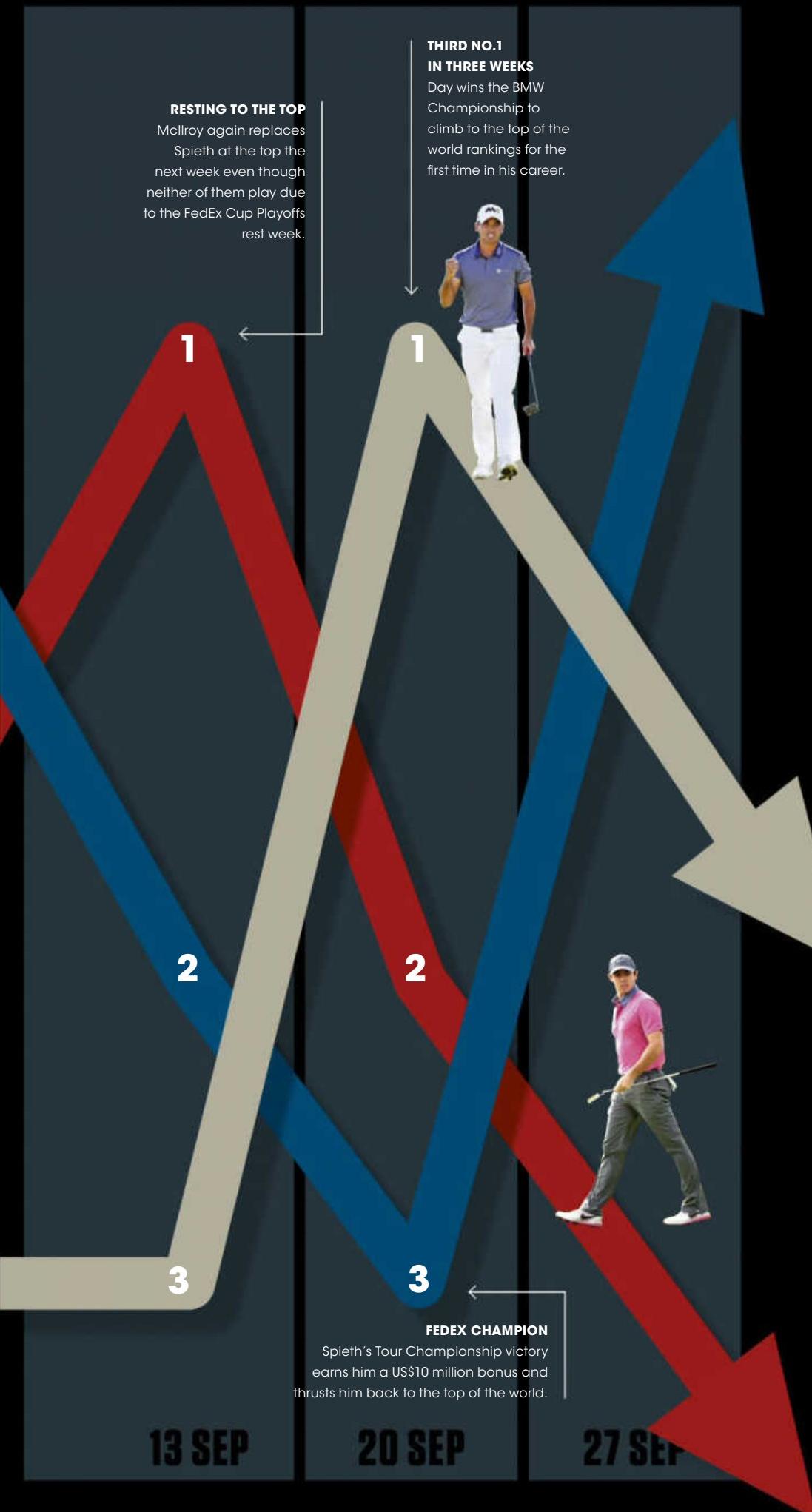
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30 AUG

6 SEP

DAY



When the idea of this article was first discussed back in mid-August, Jordan Spieth was on the verge of taking over from Rory McIlroy at the top of the Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR). The young Texan achieved that by finishing runner-up to Jason Day at the US PGA Championship, while McIlroy finished down the field in 17th place. But no one could have predicted the rollercoaster ride that was to come as the title of World No.1 changed hands six times in just seven weeks.

Spieth's initial reign was short-lived, lasting just two weeks before a missed cut at The Barclays enabled McIlroy to regain the lead without even playing in the tournament. The pair continued to exchange the top spot in unusual circumstances for the next three weeks. Then Jason Day joined the party.

While McIlroy and Spieth were swapping turns at the top of the ranking without actually setting the world on fire with their golf, the Queenslander was tearing it up. Three victories in a five-week period from mid-August to the third week in September saw him reach No.1 for the first time. Day's first stint at the peak of world golf only lasted one week, however, as Spieth rediscovered his game and his putting to dominate the Tour Championship, win the FedEx Cup and finish the PGA Tour season as World No.1.

As entertaining as this all has been to watch, it does beg the question: how and why did so many changes result and what, in particular, causes the anomalies of changes without the participants playing? The answer is, as you would probably imagine, rather complicated. In layman's terms, however, the OWGR is calculated on a two-year rolling system, which awards and deducts points from a player's tally each week. This means that during any given week, a player will receive points for their performance, while the points from two years ago are deducted. Despite missing the cut at the Deutsche Bank, Spieth lost fewer points than McIlroy, who would have needed a top-ten finish to stay No.1. The next week, McIlroy's loss was less severe than Spieth's and so he was able to pass him again.

The OWGR is the brainchild of Mark McCormack, the founder of IGM, and was introduced at the 1986 Masters at Augusta. Bernhard Langer was the inaugural World No.1 but he was quickly deposed at the top by Seve Ballesteros, and the German never regained his supremacy.

During the past 30 years, the system has had several refinements in how the points

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

IN THE THREE DECADES SINCE THE OWGR WAS INTRODUCED, ONLY 19 GOLFERS HAVE OCCUPIED THE COVETED WORLD NO.1 SPOT.

Adam Scott (11 weeks, 2014)

The Australian looked set to challenge McIlroy at the top; putting woes have seen his countryman Day go past him.

Martin Kaymer (eight weeks, 2011)

Coming off the back of his 2010 US PGA win, the German did well in WGC events in 2011 to take over.

David Duval (15 weeks, 1999)

Not a huge amount in and of itself, but it's a measure of how well he played in 1999 that he was able to dislodge Woods.

Ernie Els (nine weeks, 1997-'98)

Unfortunate to be vying for No.1 with Woods, he is the player with the second-highest number of weeks in the top-ten with 788 – the equivalent of 15 years.

Tiger Woods (683 weeks, 1997-2014)

Eleven different spells, the first coming for a week in June 1997 and the most recent for 60 consecutive weeks and ending 21 months ago. Injuries and loss of form see him currently just outside the top-400.

Jason Day (four weeks, 2015)

Produced an incredibly consistent run of form to leave McIlroy and Spieth in his wake and will surely be back.

Jordan Spieth (14 weeks, 2015)

Spieth started with two weeks, one week and one week at the top; but it didn't end there.

Bernhard Langer (three weeks, 1986)

The first No.1 was soon usurped by Seve Ballesteros and never made it back there.

Greg Norman (331 weeks, 1986-'98)

The Queenslander had 11 different stints at No.1, with eight other men holding the spot between his first accession and his last.

The 19 players who could call themselves the best in the world.
(As of Dec. 31, 2015)

Tom Lehman (one week, 1997)

Lehman holds the distinction as the only player to have spent just one week at No.1.

Nick Price (44 weeks, 1994-'95)

Wins at the 1994 Open and US PGA moved him to the top and he stayed there for the bulk of a year.

are calculated, as Ian Barker of the OWGR explains.

"It's essentially an average of events played across the last two years, with the values of the points weighted," he says. "As the performance becomes further in the past, it has less weighting applied to it so eventually the value decays right down to zero. The key fundamental to note is that it's a perpetual system. It doesn't stop and start like the Race to Dubai, for example, where everybody has zero at the start."

"In the world rankings, week one of a given year will be quite similar to week 52 of the previous year. What has to be built in is something so that players gradually lose points as well as gain them, and that's where the weighted system comes in. All of the initial points won are kept on that player's record for three months, or in system terms, 13 weeks. For the remaining 91 weeks, an equal fraction of that initial points value is lost every week, one divided by 92."

"The way I often try to explain it is that it's like you're 13 strides away from the top of a stairway which has 91 steps and you take one stride every week. You're at the same level for 13 weeks and then the 14th is the first stride down the staircase."

A key factor in the calculation of the points is what is known as the divisor. This is a figure by which a player's total points are divided, and it's based on the number of events a player plays in. The figure ranges from 40 to 52, with 40 the minimum divisor.

"Imagine a player starting his career wins ten points the first week and 20 the second, so he has 30," Barker explains. "If you divided that by the two events played, he'd average 15 world ranking points, which would make him World No.1. That's clearly not accurate."

"The final element is that the maximum divisor is the last 52 events a player has played, which protects those with heavier schedules. If you have played, say, 60 events, the system of points decaying makes it difficult for players to maintain an average. We found that players were skipping weeks in order for their divisor not to get too high, so we changed it that the maximum number of events to count was 52."

"Because Rory didn't play at The Barclays, he dropped one off his divisor which meant Jordan dropped points at a quicker rate. It's like if you and I both played off a 9.4 handicap. If I didn't play the next week and



Tim Finchem presents Tiger Woods with the McCormack award – for the player with most weeks at No.1 in a year – in 2006.

HOW IT WORKS

THE OWGR IS BASED ON SEVEN KEY PRINCIPLES.

1. World Ranking points for each player are accumulated over a rolling two-year period.
2. Any player competing in any eligible event is awarded points based on their finishing position.
3. A player's ranking is calculated by taking his total points earned in two years and divided by the number of events played (min. 40; max. 52).
4. Field strength affects points available. A WGC event with the world's top-50 players will be allocated more ranking points than a Sunshine Tour event.
5. The majors are rated separately to reflect the higher quality of the event, with any player completing all four rounds getting points.
6. Points awarded remain on a player's record for 13 weeks to reflect current performance.
7. During the other 91 weeks of the rolling two-year period, ranking points are reduced in equal increments.

you played and missed the buffer zone, your handicap would increase by 0.1 whereas mine stays the same. So now I'm off nine and you're playing off ten."

Given the way the system has been streamlined since 1986, Barker doesn't expect many more dramatic changes and believes that the current format is the best available to rank the top players.

"I'm sure there will continue to be refinements, but it has become very well established and accepted as a fair measure," he says. "There will always be people who will argue that it could be improved – a lot of the criticisms will be, 'They should do this,' or 'They should do that' – but, from a position of not understanding the mechanics or the overall job of ranking in excess of 6,000 players.

"The biggest change that has happened in the past year has been the admission of some new 'third-level' Tours and others are applying, so the net is always spreading. Nobody on those Tours is going to get so high that people will say they shouldn't be so high, but they see a reward. It also means there is extra publicity for those Tours when the next great player shows signs of emerging."

The Wedge MASTER

EXPERT WEDGE DESIGNER ROGER CLEVELAND TALKS ABOUT PHIL MICKELSON'S FLOP SHOTS, THE NEED FOR 'WEDGEDUCATION' AND THE SECRETS TO BETTER WEDGE PLAY.

INTERVIEW: STEVE KEIPERT

Take a look at your favourite wedge. *Really* look closely at it. Sure there's a broad face, oodles of loft and friendly grooves, but in truth there's so much more. Within the deep sole is a deep soul. A wedge is a work of art, but one crafted hand-in-hand with science, technology and an overriding desire to help golfers.

And there's a very good chance at least one wedge in your bag and almost certainly at least one wedge you've owned was created by Roger Cleveland. He founded Cleveland Classics (later Cleveland Golf) in 1979 and nine years later developed one of the most popular wedges of all time, the 588, so named because it was released in May 1988.

These days, Cleveland is the chief wedge designer for Callaway Golf. The master wedge designer was in Australia during our Triple Crown tournaments and spoke at length with *Golf Australia* about what makes a good wedge, why amateur golfers don't practice their wedge play enough and trusting Phil Mickelson's skills implicitly. Prepare to be 'Wedgeducated'.

Golf Australia: How much golf does the designer of some of the game's leading equipment get to play?

Roger Cleveland: You'd think the golf-club industry would play a lot but you work a lot. You tend not to play as much as you think you might. These days I might get out twice a month or so.

GA: What is your handicap?

Cleveland: My handicap index is nine. I have two short games – so my long game is short then I have my short game! When you start hearing your drives land, that's not a good sign.

GA: How does wedge play differ from regular iron play?

Cleveland: That's a great question, because that's what I try to go around and tell people, especially amateurs. The pros understand and get it, but the amateur does not. There's a great number of wonderful teachers here but by and large, in the States anyway, a lot of pros might not have good short games themselves and if they don't, they don't necessarily want to teach the short game or put their short game on display.

They can hit shots but it's a different stroke. In a big swing you compress down into the ball; here you sweep the ball more. You

release the club much earlier and are much wider and you've got to use the sole as a skid plate. You have to rotate your arms so you can rotate – not your wrists – but rotate your arms. So you set the loft and you're wide so you can bring the sole down with loft and have proper turf interaction where you're not upsetting the turf, you're just skimming the turf. If you use your wrists, those wrists have to uncock so you've got a delay and you get steeper and it's harder to put that sole on the ground.

It's a different stroke. In the bunker it's the same thing, but an exaggeration of that. I like to think of rotating your arms while your arms are in front. In your [full] swing, your arms swing back then you rotate back. But on the short game, [it's] right in front of you.

GA: I love your concept of 'Wedgeducation'. What does the average golfer not understand about wedge play?

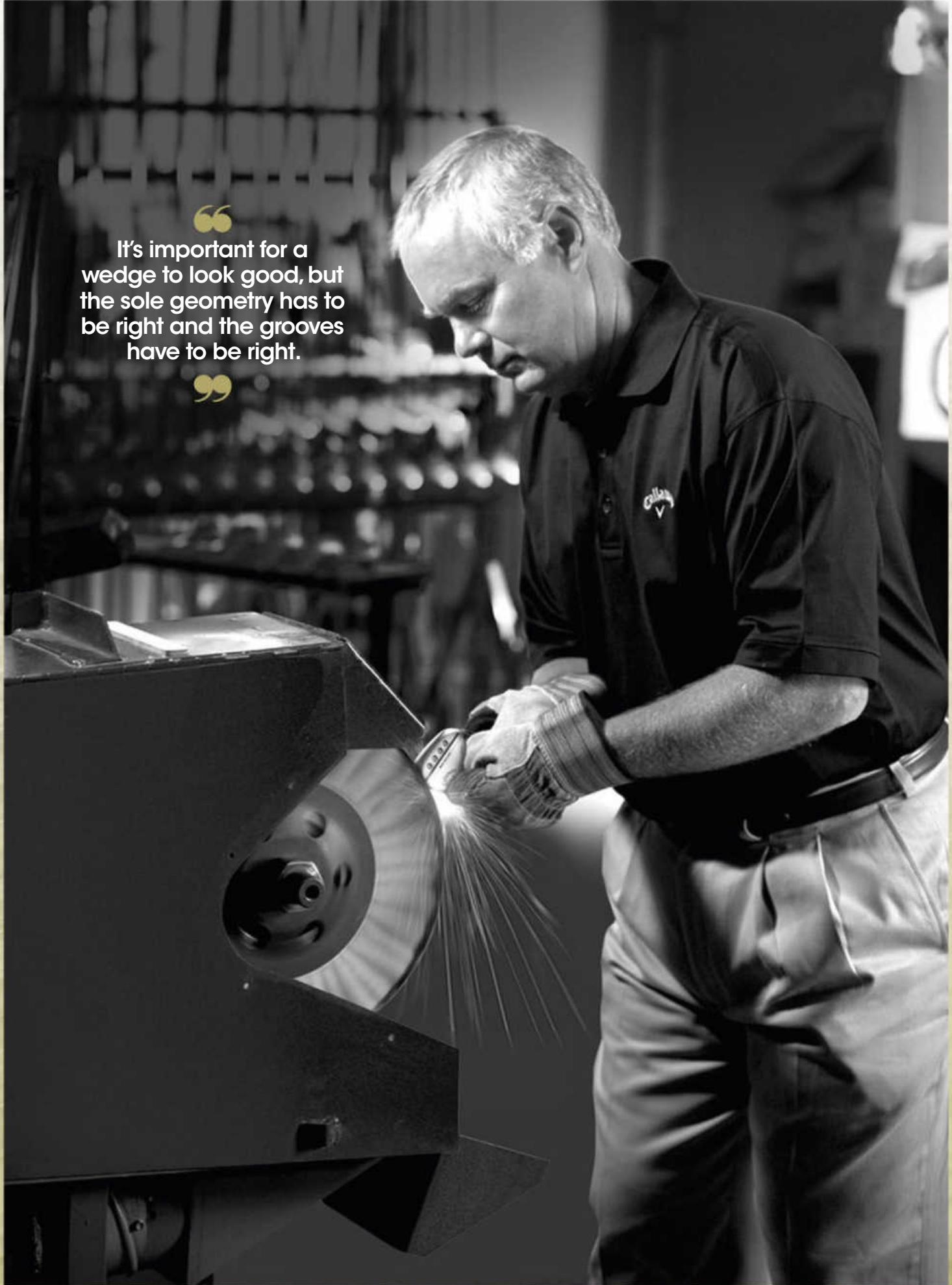
Cleveland: Just how a wedge works. They see the loft and they try to pick it off without rotation. They use their big swing and they take it back with their arms, which doesn't change the loft at all and it doesn't open up the opportunity to use the sole, so they have got to be perfect all the way down to hit the shot. Most people aren't [perfect]. Most people, what they do is reverse weight shift to add loft, and if that's the case what you need is less bounce but really what people need is more bounce. If you learn how to hit it properly then you can use the sole as a skid plate.

You don't have to be perfect. You can hit behind the ball and let the sole skid and let the club go through the ball and good things happen. Mickelson actually talks about not hitting the ball first and letting it slide. He's wide and he talks about 'hinge and hold' but actually he is hinging, which is rotating, and then he releases down to the shaft being perpendicular and then he holds that [position]. So that is actually his rotation, he is releasing the club.

GA: Can you explain 'bounce' to me in one sentence?

Cleveland: Probably not in one but I can do it in a paragraph.

It's the shortest club in your bag, therefore your arc is the tightest arc. Because of that you don't want to just dig, you want to skid. So with the shaft being vertical, the trailing edge is lower than the leading edge to give you a skid plate and it works to your advantage because you don't have to use that leading edge. That is bounce. Bounce is that angle, with your shaft being vertical, of the



“
It's important for a
wedge to look good, but
the sole geometry has to
be right and the grooves
have to be right.
”



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Phil Mickelson and Roger Cleveland have collaborated on Callaway Golf's most recent wedge models; Cleveland with Matthew Guyatt at The Australian Golf Club during the Open; Assessing the bunker play of short-game maestro Craig Parry.



trailing edge relative to the leading edge. You can take a protractor and find out what your bounce is really quickly.

Bounce changes a little bit. With your iron set, typically whatever the number is on the bottom that's the bounce on the club. An 8-iron has eight degrees of bounce; when you get into your wedge, it's got 12. Then you go up on your sand iron to 13, 14 and then you go back down in your lob wedge because you're opening it up. When you open a wedge, you add bounce so you want to be more creative and versatile with your lob wedge. So two paragraphs!

GA: Has there been a recent shift to educate golfers on the importance of the right bounce?

Cleveland: I would say the shift is towards education. Once you understand why you have it, you want to use it. And most people have never understood that and still don't. They don't understand the technique because this area of your short game, bunker play or just pitching, is the area where you can improve your score, lower your score much faster than any other part of your game.

And the pros spend a lot of time there. I was asking Mr Lee (Danny), one of our staffers, yesterday how much time he spends practising his short game versus long game and he said 70 percent, which is a lot. I don't think most amateurs spend 70 percent of their time on it. It's probably the other way around. It's probably 90/10 and the short game amounts to putting, not chipping. Maybe they don't have access to places but most facilities have some access to a good pitching green and a bunker. And the technique, some of the 'Wedgeducation' that they can get online with some instructors, that's where they can really improve.

GA: Is wedge design more art or science?

Cleveland: There's a lot of science in the grooves and we have

three different groove geometries in the new MD3s where we want the maximum groove we can give you in the lob wedge and the middle wedge a little bit less spin. And that morphs into the set, into your pitching wedge and your gap wedges because we don't want so much spin you cannot find a back pin. You want to keep it there; you want spin it but you're normally hitting those shots full. So there's some technical aspects to that. The sole geometries are pretty technical. Other than that, it hasn't changed much because we don't want compliance. I don't want to hit my wedge swinging a certain speed and hit it ten yards farther. That's good for irons and hybrids, fairway woods and woods but not wedges.

As for the art, it's important for a wedge to look good, but the sole geometry has to be right and the grooves have to be right. You can have those two and have an ugly-looking wedge and it would still work but it wouldn't be as appealing. Art's important for me.

GA: Is wedge play more art or science?

Cleveland: To me, if you have good technique it's art. You get really good with the feel if you have good technique. One of the best in Australia is Brett Rumford. 'Rummy' is marvellous, but you look at the technique and how wide he is – or Jason Day – he is extremely wide on his backswing and downswing. If you want to pitch a ball, you should look at Steve Stricker. There's rotation but there's no wrist break, and when that happens you can bring that sole back down to the ground and not the leading edge. The leading edge is not your friend.

It's an art when you have the proper technique, then you can use the feel and the judgement of what the shot needs and requires.

GA: What's left to be innovated in wedge crafting?

Cleveland: The PM wedge, Phil's wedge, was an interesting



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Young Melbourne professional Todd Sinnott sampling Callaway's wedges.

project. In 2014 he used a Ping wedge and we asked him why, and he said because when he opens the club he felt like a traditional-sized wedge would go under the ball.

So I went back and took a wedge that we had with that sole he likes and cut a couple of them in half and welded one on and took it out to him at the PGA Championship in 2014. When you weld it on there's just big chunks so I took a Sharpie, ground it, took the weight out of the sole in an area and in a way that didn't affect the geometry of the sole. Anyway, he got it on the Monday of the PGA Championship and used it, loved it. And Chip Brewer, our CEO, said, "This is pretty exciting. We should market this thing if we can use Phil's name." So we put the PM on it, or he allowed us to do that.

And that's a really technical wedge. What he was doing is when you open up, you hit further up the face as you add loft. When you open it up to add loft you actually reduce the area of the face and bring the hosel more into play, which you don't want to strike, and so you go a little bit further out and that's why the toe is where it is.

Going further, when we started to develop the product to commercialise it, Phil said, "Let's put the scorelines all the way up to the top because I hit it out there." And also at the same time it makes it look bigger, it looks like a shovel, so it's very good. And then we had to drill holes to lighten up the head because we added the toe, which raises the centre of gravity, which increases spin. All those things were factors. We have a concave sole, which moves the bounce point back and lets the leading edge get under the ball.

GA: What's your favourite story from working with players?

Cleveland: The first wedge I did at Cleveland, I had some really wonderful input from Peter Thomson. I didn't have a laboratory back then, my laboratory was the Tour and fellows like Dave Stockton and Corey Pavin. And Peter Thomson happened to come over at a particular time when we made pretty good persimmon woods at Cleveland. And he contacted me and we helped him out with some woods and we became friends and I respect the man dearly. He commented and told me his thoughts, and you want to listen when somebody like that talks and so it was good, good fun.

That was a great relationship and I've had some really wonderful ones with Ben Crenshaw and some guys like that. So we always learn. Lee Trevino used the wedge and was wonderful with it. He wanted so many that he said, "No, no, no, I'll buy them." Normally we just supply the pros but he said, "You've got to send me like 20,

25 wedges." And he wanted them raw, he didn't want any polish on them because he wanted the faces as rough as possible. These guys knew what they were looking for. He just took out a drill and drilled these massive holes in the back of them, which actually raised the centre of gravity. He probably knew what he was doing.

David Graham was really helpful, especially in the wood area. To me, he is probably the most technical with equipment of any player I've ever worked with. He had a really keen eye, so I appreciated what he said. He said it sometimes in a way that you wanted to listen to him. He's a good man.

GA: The footage of Phil Mickelson hitting a flop shot over your head now has more than 655,000 hits on YouTube. And you didn't flinch! What was higher: your confidence in the wedges or in his ability?

Cleveland: His ability. He could probably have done that with a broom. I know with the wedge, I know what he can do. If you see the video, I put a golf club down, a wedge, 35 inches long, to [illustrate the short distance between the two men]. Try that sometime with somebody. He's swinging very hard there, by the way. He's swinging at 85 to 90 miles per hour with that wedge.

GA: We know he's a Callaway staffer, but is Phil the poster-boy for wedge artistry?

Cleveland: I would think so. There are artists out there who I admire. Jason Day is an artist. Jordan Spieth is an artist. McIlroy. It's interesting, these three guys are pretty good, 1-2-3 in the world. They're artists and they're brilliant and their technical skills are brilliant, but when it comes down to if you had one shot, who would you put in there? It'd be Phil.

The shot that he hit at the 2012 Masters. He was at the back right of 15 and the pin was left. He takes out a wedge, takes his full swing with this wedge. It's downhill, there's water on the other side, the greens are running at 14, it's going downhill and there are stands on the other side of the water on Sarazen Bridge as you're looking at that shot. If I were hitting that shot, all I would be looking at is my ball sailing over the stands and he hit it up there about five feet.

GA: What are you most proud of in your career?

Cleveland: Just making good equipment. I always want to make it good looking. If there's anything I pride myself on it's the art of the club, but I always try to get the most performance capabilities out of my clubs.

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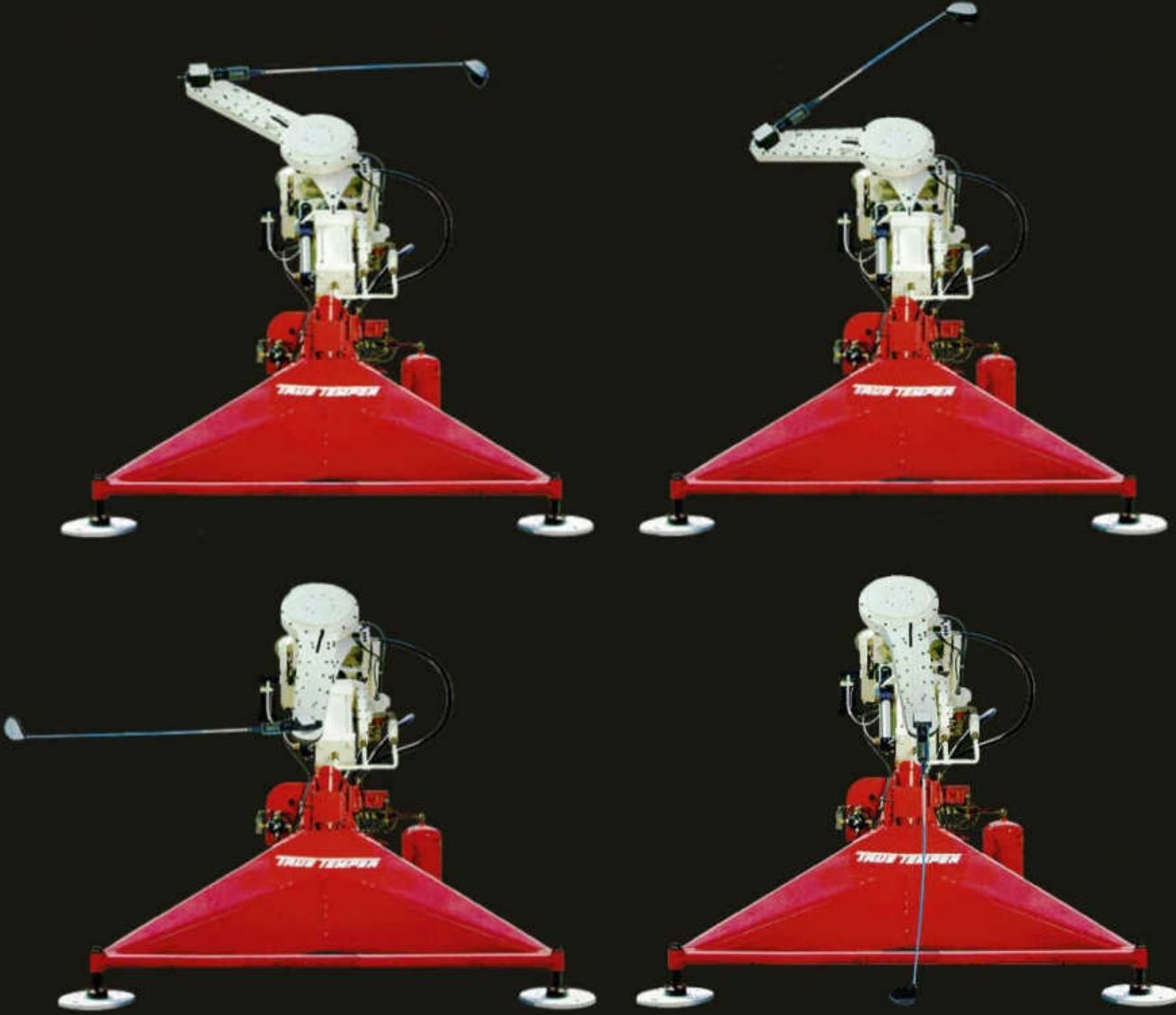
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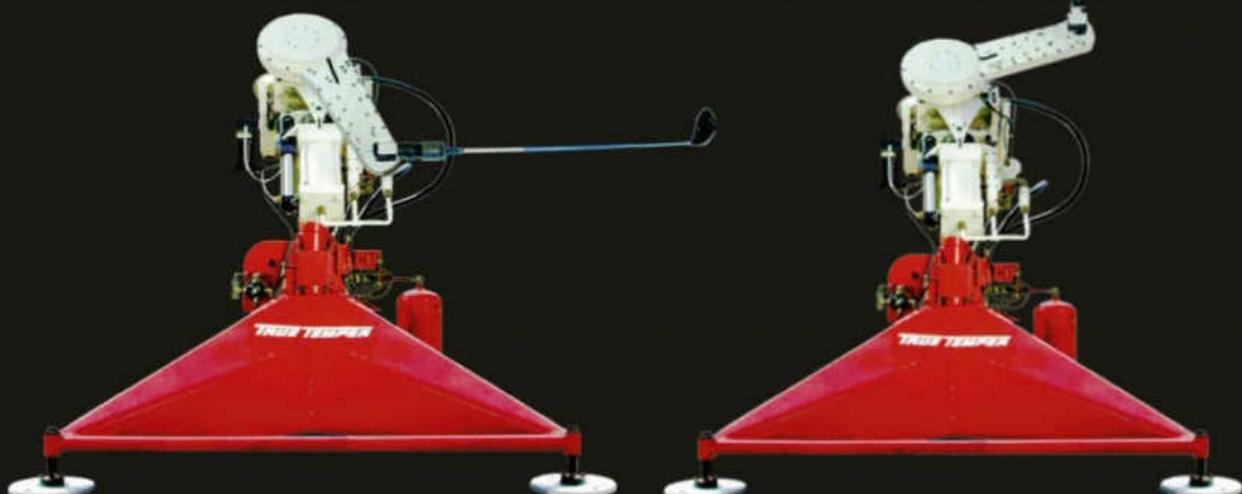
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ROBOT KING

ONE MACHINE MADE MORE OF AN IMPACT IN GOLF THAN ANY OTHER BEFORE,
OR ARGUABLY AFTER. HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY, IRON BYRON.

WORDS: DUNCAN LENNARD
PHOTOGRAPHY: TRUE TEMPER; GEORGE MANNING



Some say it's Tiger Woods; most say it's Tommy Bolt. But no, the angriest golfer ever was the Iron Byron swing machine. In its three-year development and testing period, Iron Byron broke countless clubs – even after striking some pretty acceptable shots. If its technique mimicked its namesake, the genteel Byron Nelson, its temper most certainly did not.

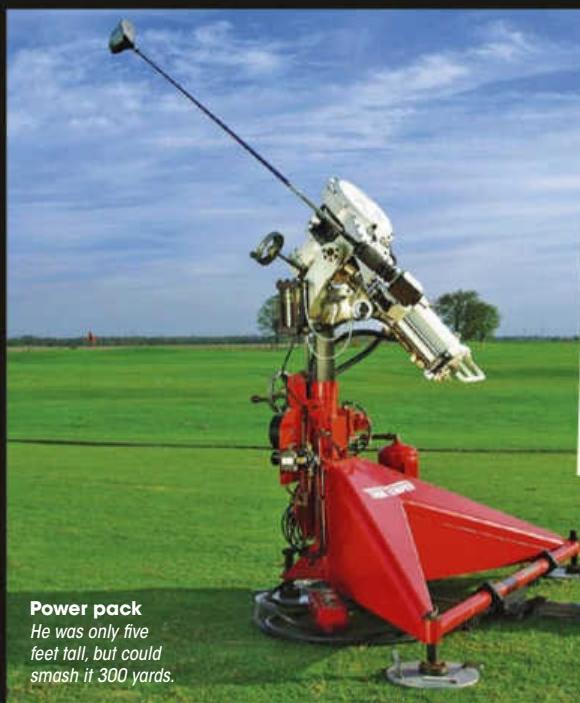
"One of our biggest problems was stopping the swing without snapping the clubshaft," recalls George Manning, the engineer who headed up the project to build golf's first mechanical golfer – 50 years old next month.

"Timing the club's deceleration was both vital and tricky. If we triggered it too early, it affected impact; if we triggered it too late, the club stopped too abruptly and snapped – usually up near the grip end. The sight of a lethal metal shard flying through the air was not uncommon. Normally they somersaulted forwards. We learned very quickly always to stand behind the machine during testing."

Manning eventually found the solution – disc brakes in multiple layers, controlled by air pressure applied at precise times. It would prove just another hiccup in the quest to build a machine that was not just club-breaking, but genuinely groundbreaking.

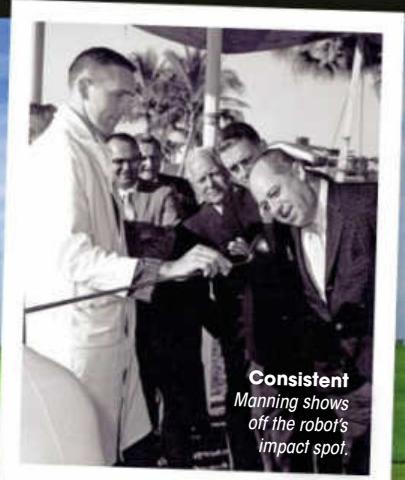
The Iron Byron owed its existence to the simple fact that equipment makers felt the need to deal with fact – and not opinion – in evaluating their new products. Until the early 1960s, club testing was essentially a case of collecting a group of elite players, giving them a hit, and asking them what they thought. Anything – from liking the colour of the head to whether the golfer had argued with his wife that morning – might compromise their feedback. A more rigorous, scientific approach was called for – and that call was answered by the largest shaft manufacturer in the world: True Temper. The firm, at the time based in Ohio, provided shafts for all of the game's major clubmakers. Frustrated by the fact the precision of their shaft-making process was not matched by the exactness of their testing, they decided to commission the construction of an objective, opinion-free, mood-free golf-ball-slugging automaton.

In 1962 they explained their plan to the Battelle Institute, a local not-for-profit research organisation – where a 27-year-old engineer named George Manning happened to be free. "I was intrigued by the project," he drawls.



Power pack

He was only five feet tall, but could smash it 300 yards.



Consistent
Manning shows off the robot's impact spot.

"I was interested in golf, played off about eight. True Temper asked us if it was possible to develop a machine that would swing exactly like a man. We convinced them it was. I was made chief engineer for the project."

Manning appreciated that before they could build a machine that swung like a man, they must first establish how a man swung the club. "So we gathered elite amateurs and professionals and took high speed pictures using a stroboscope. Then we plotted frame-by-frame what the shaft and the club were doing as they progressed from the top through impact. That was painstaking work – perhaps the most tedious part of the project."

Though many regard Ben Hogan as the most machine-like golfer who had ever lived, the Hawk was not involved in this research. Manning recalls some contact, but believes Hogan was too busy establishing his own equipment company to get involved.

Instead, the team alighted on Byron Nelson. Fifty years old and retired, Nelson was nevertheless recognised as an outstanding exponent of the current swing. He agreed to get involved, and was put under contract at True Temper for the project.

"We certainly used a lot of Byron Nelson's data in developing the machine because he was so repeatable," says Manning. "The closest relationship between the two was in their consistency. Byron's was almost super-human. Eventually we got the machine's swing velocity within half-a-percent every time."

Tedious the initial work may have been, but in plotting the swing in minute detail Manning's team made an important discovery. While the backswings varied wildly, the downswings bordered on identical. "They all got it in plane; they all had a very late release, they were all still accelerating right up through impact," says Manning.

"But the best message from the high speed pictures was that there was a clear centre of rotation to every downswing move. Even though there is leg and body motion, it occurs around a point in space, and as a result we could duplicate that. It allowed us to design a machine with an arm that rotated around a fixed point."

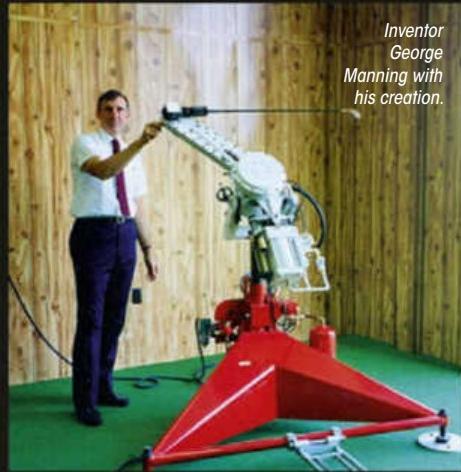
But it wasn't all so simple. For the machine to be of any use to True Temper, it had to represent accurately the stresses placed on a shaft by a human swing. The unique combination of rotation and release created by the hand and arm action created a specific pattern of forces down through the shaft – a pattern that would prove tough to imitate.

Manning recalls up to a dozen people working on the project – and one by one, technical issues began to evaporate. A camera was added to record data. Swing speed could be measured electronically. And problems securing the club to the swinging arm were solved by the development of a grip that had adjustable mechanical fingers which could be loosened and tightened. At this stage the machine was still known as the Mechanical Golfer, or even more ardently as the Golf Club Testing Device. The Iron Byron moniker would not arrive for three more years.

Iron Byron owed its existence to the fact equipment makers had to deal in fact, not opinion.



Human Byron
Manning with the legend whose swing he copied, Byron Nelson.



Inventor George Manning with his creation.

THE HEYDAY

By 1966 the Mechanical Golfer was passed fit for duty. Manning headed to Madison, Ohio, to demonstrate it to True Temper. Duly impressed, they took delivery. Then they travelled en masse to Florida to showcase the machine to the PGA and the trade. "This is when it all broke loose," says Manning. "The PGA wanted one, the USGA wanted one; most of the major club makers wanted one ..."

True Temper had in fact not patented the Iron Byron, perhaps reasoning that building one would prove more expensive than buying one from them – this despite an asking price in the region of \$100,000. "That was at a time when I was earning around \$7,500 a year," laughs Manning. "They were not inexpensive."

So began the heyday for the Iron Byron. Virtually all the major clubmakers bought one. Very quickly, there were about 40 at work – and almost as fast, companies discovered just how deep Iron Byron's talents ran.

"When True Temper originally commissioned the Iron Byron, we were simply looking for a way to mimic the swing and control testing," says Mike McCaskey, a True Temper R&D test specialist who worked with the Iron Byron almost every day for about ten years. "But things developed from there.

"A lot of what we did was quite crude – basically the manual versions of what the digital launch monitors do today. We would draw dots on the ball then take high-speed pictures to chart its movement, and so the ball's spin. We used light gauges to measure ball speed. It was basic, but it worked."

But perhaps the ultimate endorsement of the machine's quality was in the USGA's willingness to take advantage of the possibilities it offered for testing product conformity. "We took delivery of our first Iron Byron in 1971, and it was pressed into service a year later," says the USGA's assistant technical director John Spitzer. "We used it almost exclusively for golf ball conformity testing."

Such was the consistency of the machine that it became the ball-beating heart of the USGA's Overall Distance Standard. From 1976, all Overall Distance testing was done with the Iron Byron. That consistency quickly became the stuff of legend. Rumours spread that the USGA were having to re-lay the centre strip of its test fairway every two years because of the damage caused by golf balls pummelling the same spot time and time again.

"I'm not sure if that is true – if it happened,

it was before my time," says Spitzer. "But I do know our range had a hole cut into it with a flag along the centre line. We eventually removed the hole and flag because Iron Byron would regularly hole out, forcing us to re-hit the shot to make sure we got the total roll."

"During testing, one of us would go out into the field to collect the balls," Manning recollects. "We'd catch them on the bounce. You might have to move your arm, but never your feet."

Eventually – inevitably – Iron Byron's fortune began to wane. By 1992, there were ten companies, running about 20 machines. It wasn't just the advent of new ball-slugging machines, like Wilson's Ball Launcher or the Miya Shot Robo V, which offered increased functionality, such as the ability to hold off or cast the clubhead. It was also the late-'90s spike in ball and club technology that came from a different world than the laminated wooden heads and 42-inch shafts the Iron Byron was built to wield.

"As time went on, the launch conditions the machine could produce became less representative of how elite players were playing the game," Spitzer explains.

"The average clubhead speed on Tour now is 113mph. The machines we use today use electrical solenoid systems and can swing the club up to 130mph, though we set them at 120mph for ball conformance testing."

By the mid-to-late 1990s, fewer Iron Byrons were being sold, despite the price holding pretty steady – \$125,000 in the mid-'90s. The USGA was the last body to retire its Iron Byron, keeping faith in the machine right up until 2004.

"I think the main legacy of the Iron Byron is that it got people thinking scientifically about golf equipment, rather than just getting a group of people together and asking them what they thought," Manning adds. "Before, there were so many intangibles: after this, it was fact and not opinion."

"And that was always the intent."

BY THE NUMBERS

- 50** Iron Byron's age this year.
- 100,000** The amount, in dollars, he cost manufacturers to buy in 1966.
- 2** The years of development before the robot could be revealed.
- 7** The number of holes-in-one made by Iron Byron.
- 24** The number of months USGA test fairway turf lasted before constant hits into the same spot wore it out.
- 250,000** The amount in dollars the original Iron Byron cost to build.
- 52** Byron Nelson's PGA Tour wins, including five majors.

This guy can carry it 400 yards

DR PAUL WOOD, VICE PRESIDENT OF ENGINEERING AT PING, REVEALS WHAT A NEW ROBOT CAN DO.

This is the fifth version of Ping Man, a robot inspired by Iron Byron that was designed by Ping founder Karsten Solheim in the 1970s because he believed he could engineer something even better. We have two of them here in Phoenix,

one to produce shot data and one to test durability, especially shafts. We use them every day – they are invaluable in the club design process. The swing is repeatable and precise enough that we can target any part of the clubface to see the affect on ball

flight data. Of course, Ping Man can't give us feedback on the sound of a club, or the look of a club, or how it feels off the face, so we still do an awful lot of player testing, probably 50-50. But there are lots of things a robot can do that a human can't ... ☺

FASTER THAN BUBBA!

Ping Man can swing at 150mph, maybe a bit higher. Bubba Watson's swing speed is 125. How far can it hit a ball? Obviously you need to optimise lofts, launch angle, shaft, etc. But I'll tell you this; we have a range here in Phoenix and it's 345 yards to the back fence. That fence is 20 yards high. Ping Man can easily hit it over that fence, a 400-yard carry.

FEEL V REAL

A robot is the essence of scientific method. If we need to test a certain shaft at a certain speed and a certain impact location and launch angle, it will do that.

LAUNCH MONITOR

Ping Man is hooked up to TrackMan, to collect data from every shot we hit. We have more than 500,000 shots on a database, going back to the early 2000s.

AUTOMATIC TEE

It can be set to a specific height, so we control the impact location. Balls are loaded automatically. Small water jets can even add moisture to the ball if required.



LIFELIKE SWING

Ping Man has a wrist joint which hinges freely. The maximum wrist cock angle is beyond 90°. His wrist is free-rotating, allowing it to turn freely through impact.

IT CAN HIT ANY SHOT

Yes, even a shank ... a shot with 100 percent pure sidespin. He can hit any shot with any club, though we don't use it for putting – another machine does that.

THE RESULTS

There are 'eureka' moments, like when we first tested our new GMax irons with the 'Core Eye' in the cavity. We had to check him to make sure we'd set him up correctly!

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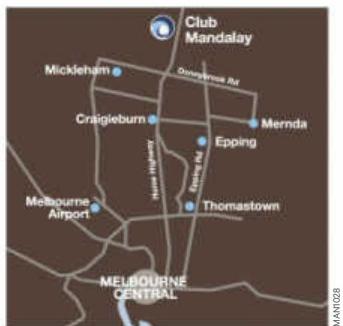
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TOUR COACH GARY NICOL HAS 12 SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE ALL ASPECTS OF THE GAME ... AND BAFFLING JARGON IS BANNED!

WORDS: **GARY NICOL & CHRIS BERTRAM**
PHOTOGRAPHY: **MARK NEWCOMBE**

If you usually bypass golf instruction because it sounds so complicated it verges on bewildering, give this feature a chance. Over the next ten pages I eschew the kind of technically loaded terminology that I'm sure makes your brain switch off and your eyes glaze over in favour of ever-so-simple tips, drills and feels.

I didn't just want the information to be easy to understand, I also wanted it to be easy to remember and apply. There's no point reading it now, thinking it seemed like advice that could help you ... only to have forgotten it by the time you've turned the page.

Having too many swing thoughts is never a good idea, so pick out one or two and work on them until they become automatic. All we are trying to do is simplify your processes by providing useful images and thoughts rather than too much head-hurting information – what we'll refer to as 'the jargon'.

I hope your future scorecards prove to be evidence of our quest. Let's get started ...



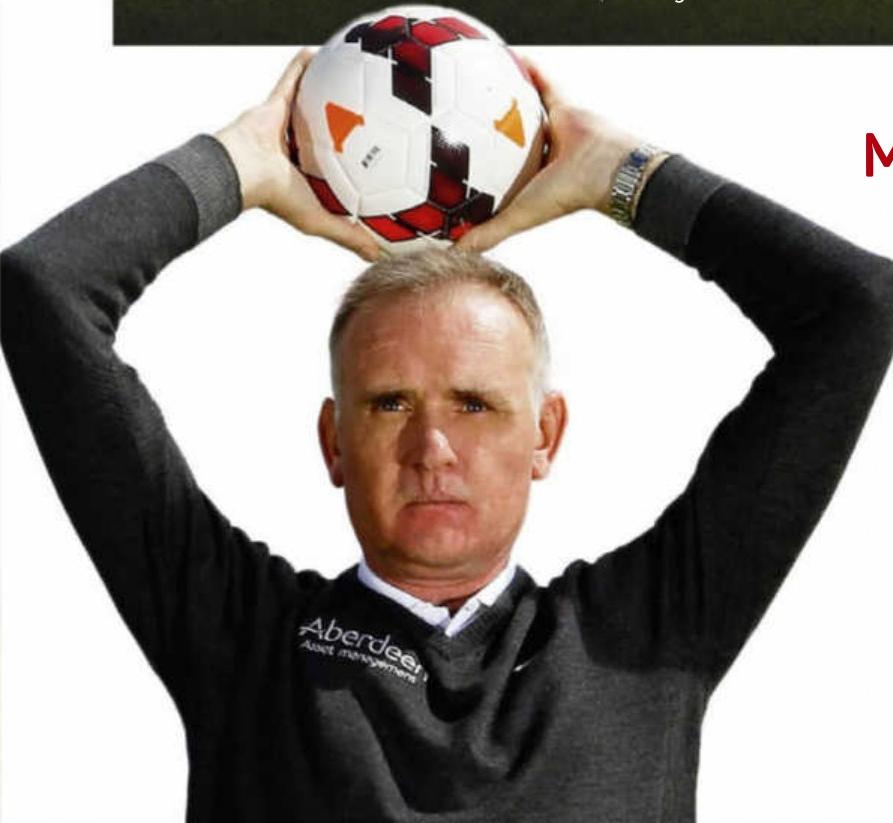
Draw it with the driver

THINK OF A CORNER KICK TO SWAP YOUR WEAK FADE FOR A POWERFUL, DRAWING TEE SHOT.

THE JARGON Historically, you'd hear you need to "release the club through impact by rotating your wrists/hands/forearms/clubface through impact". Not only is that incredibly difficult to achieve consistently, we now know through TrackMan that it's factually incorrect.

A more accurate statement is "in order to draw the ball, the face has to be slightly to the right of your target then swing a little in-to-out to create the relevant spin axis to work the ball back to the target. Essentially, "the face sends it and the path bends it". But here's a very simple thought instead ...

THE SENSE Think of it as an in-swinging corner kick in soccer. If you are right footed, imagine being in the left corner and what you'd do instinctively to start the ball on the penalty spot and swing it into the six-yard box. Your foot will start the ball at your target and the direction it travels in will do the rest.



More distance off the tee YARDS BY THINKING ABOUT TAKING A THROW-IN.

THE JARGON "To hit it further, drive your legs laterally to generate power" – but even if you understood that, you wouldn't use the ground as an energy source, which 'force ate' technology advises. I have a more simple analogy ...

THE SENSE With a horse and cart, it looks like the horse is going the cart, but it is actually two pushing motions combined – like the swing. The horse is pushing against the ground to initial force and pushing against the harness to continue that momentum. In the swing, you are pushing off the ground to create and pushing energy down the shaft and through the ball. McIlroy does this brilliantly, like a boxer throwing a big punch. Here's another simple thought; imagine taking a throw-in soccer ball, using the ground to push off from. That dynamic is how you should use the ground as an energy source.

Better ball-striking with your irons

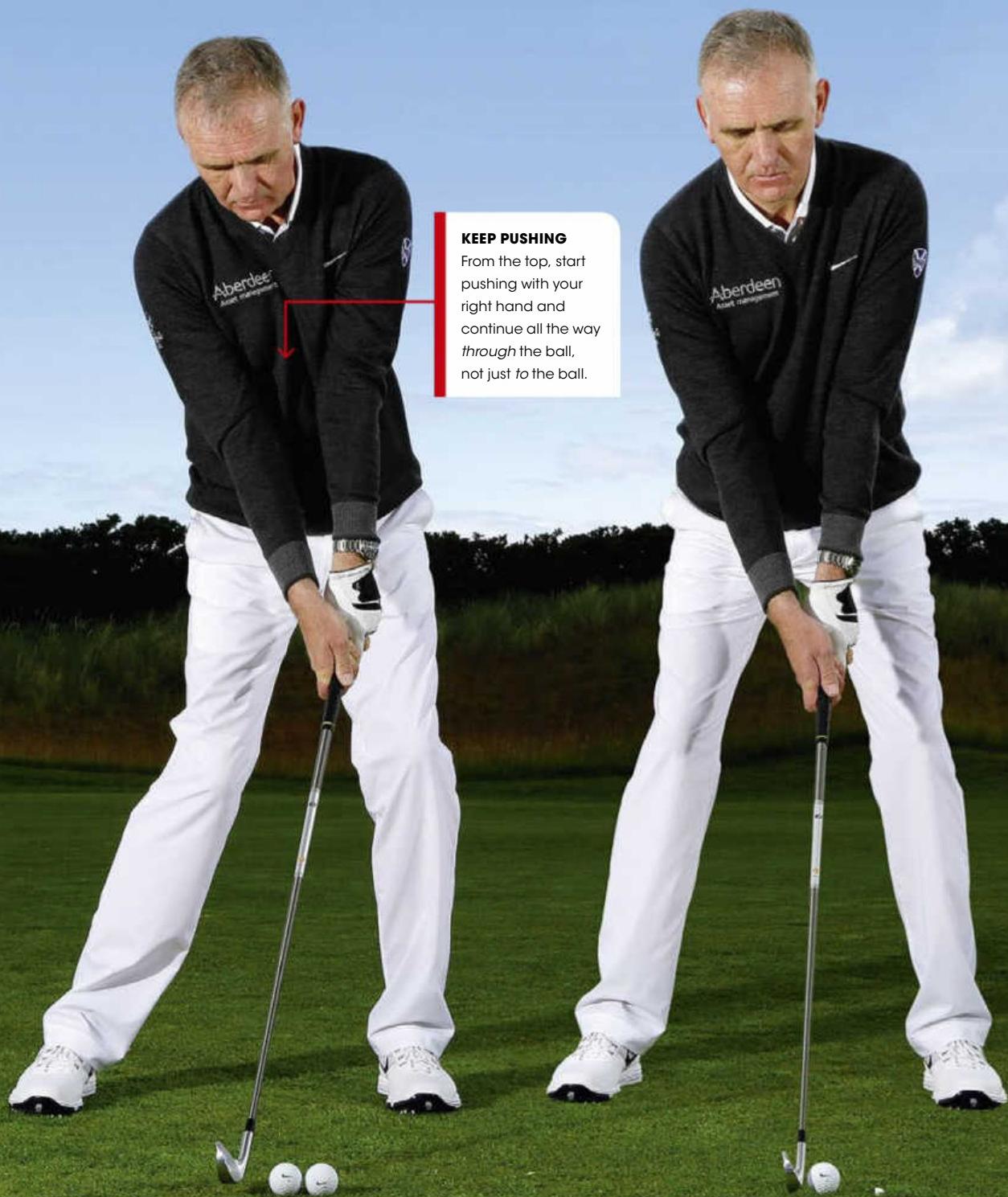
VISUALISE THIS TWO-BALL SET-UP TO HIT SWEETLY STRUCK IRON SHOTS.

THE JARGON "You must hit down on the ball." We've all heard and read it. How do you hit down on the ball? For me, that is hitting on top of the ball, asking you to pull down with your left hand then 'release' it through impact. But do that in an attempt to 'hit down on the ball' and your shoulders will point way left, your club path will follow, you get steep and hit a weak fade or a straight pull.

THE SENSE Instead, I'd like you to push down with your right hand, so the shoulders stay in position. Whatever position you get to at the top, think 'push down' with your right hand as you start your downswing. We're trying to push energy down the shaft until your left arm and shaft are fully extended as one through impact; continue to push and you control the clubface's loft and direction.

Here's the key: with the image of the two golf balls clear in your mind, visualise

striking the second ball after the first by pushing the clubhead low enough for long enough. This enhances the chance of the middle of the face and the middle of the ball matching up for a solid strike. If the clubhead starts to work up too soon, you will hit it a bit thin. Pushing a short tee peg in an inch or so target side of the ball is another drill which provides you with instant feedback. Dislodge the tee and you'll strike it properly; miss it, and you won't.





GOOD
Looking good as I come in to impact.



BAD
Too much out to in, I'll clip the box.

Hit it straight

A CARDBOARD BOX CAN IMPROVE SWING PATH.

■ THE JARGON Better iron shots via a better swing path? The talk would be of "the slot" (wherever or whatever that is), driving your legs, drop it on the inside before releasing the club through impact. There might also be a bit about swing plane. All this in less than two seconds?!

■ THE SENSE Don't worry about how your swing looks at 'the top'; think about where you are swinging the club to, not from. We don't hit the ball in the backswing. This cardboard box that my Nike driver came in gives instant feedback. Hit the box before the ball and your path is too much out-to-in, hit it after the ball and your path is too much in-to-out. Focusing on where you push the clubhead to takes care of path, plane and face in one fell swoop! Forget trying to co-ordinate all those fancy moves in less than two seconds.

The ideal posture

ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS COPY DAVID DE GEA OR NOVAK DJOKOVIC.

■ THE JARGON I've heard all sorts about distribution of weight, and dynamic or athletic posture ... it's amazing how standing still can be made to sound so complicated.

■ THE SENSE Yes we want the weight towards the balls of our feet, which are approximately shoulder width apart (and be realistic here, because sadly most of our shoulders really aren't as wide as we'd like to think!). And we want our knees to be 'unlocked' rather than 'flexed' which to me suggests tension. But forget all that, I just want you to think of this – imagine you are a goalkeeper facing a penalty or a tennis player waiting to receive a serve. Think about how well balanced and 'ready' they are. Mimic what David de Gea or Novak Djokovic look like between the posts or on the baseline and you've got your ideal set-up position. Easy!



Make a smooth start

THE SOCCER BALL IS BACK, THIS TIME FOR A QUICK DRILL TO ENGRAIN THE IDEAL WAY TO START YOUR BACKSWING.

■ **THE JARGON** A lot of people talk about the “takeaway”. For me that suggests Indian or Chinese food, or good old-fashioned fish and chips. “Use your shoulders to initiate the takeaway” or “set the club in motion by ...” When all we’re really looking for is a smooth start to the golf swing.

■ **THE SENSE** Get the soccer ball out again and place it about a foot away from your ball in line with your target – but clubhead side of the ball. All I want you to do is use enough force to gently push the ball away as you start your swing smoothly. Pick the club up too steeply and you’ll miss it. Take it too much on the inside or behind you and you’ll miss it. Groove this smooth start and you’ll never have to worry about how to start your swing again other than the odd refresher now and then.

ON THE INSIDE

I've started the swing too much on the inside, so I've missed the ball – it's still opposite my right foot.





HOW TO CARRY OUT THE EASIEST DRILL IN GOLF

If there is a more simple but effective drill in golf than this, I'd love to hear it. It's easy to set up, gives instant feedback and when engrained into your swing it results in perfect technique. Knock the ball away from opposite your back foot as you take the club back and you've started your swing correctly. Miss it and you're way too steep or way too much to the inside. Merely clip it and you still need a bit of work. End of lesson!



Improve clubhead control

VISUALISE A SQUASH OR TENNIS RACQUET TO UNDERSTAND WHERE THE CLUBFACE IS POINTING.

■ THE JARGON I've often heard that the big muscles control the clubface through impact but have always struggled with that notion. In any other bat and ball sports, the hands control where the club/racquet/bat points – so why should golf be any different?

■ THE SENSE By using a squash racquet, the larger surface area quite clearly demonstrates where the 'face' is pointing. This is because if you hit the ball to the left, you would point the

we can control where the palm of your right hand is pointing and the direction it's travelling in, we can control the clubface.



PALM READING

Control where your right palm points and the direction it's travelling in and you control the clubface.

Be sure of success from sand

THINK OF THE EGG WHEN YOU GET IN A BUNKER AND YOU'LL RELISH RATHER THAN FEAR THEM.

■ **THE JARGON** What, don't you hear about how to hit bunker shots?! Get your weight on your left side, accelerate, swing through, take plenty of sand, don't take too much sand, swing out to in, open the face, cut across the ball, get underneath the ball,

don't scoop it, don't lift your head ... the list is endless and rarely helpful. It's no wonder so many club golfers fear playing from sand so much.

■ **THE SENSE** While a lot of the 'tips' I listed

in "The jargon" have some technical merit, the problem essentially goes back to the fact most golfers don't really know why their sand wedge is designed the way it is – and even more importantly how to use it correctly.



The majority of club players take too much sand by digging in with the leading edge while some others take too little by trying to scoop or help the ball out of the bunker.

All I want you to do is this: imagine there is an oval shape drawn into the sand – basically a large egg – with your ball about a third of the way into it. Now take a shallow ‘sand divot’

– approximately a centimetre deep – using the bounce (or back edge) of the sole. The key feeling is that you are pushing the back edge of the sole into and through the sand. Do that and you can start watching the ball fly out of the bunker and land on the green. Using the bounce, not the leading edge, will determine and control how much sand you take.

BYE BYE EGG

As I swing to my finish, you can see the centimetre-deep divot I've made where the egg was.



SWING LOW
Swinging with two wedges helps you groove the bottom of your swing.

Better extension = better strikes

SWINGING TWO WEDGES ISN'T JUST A WARM-UP DRILL.

THE JARGON “Great players have great extension through the ball. You need to extend your arms through impact.” Both very true statements – but why do we need to do it, and how do we achieve it?

THE SENSE There isn't a great deal to think about here – this is just a very useful drill: 1) it is a great warm-up exercise, and 2) it helps give you the feeling of your arms extending through the ball.

Make a few gentle practice swings with your two most lofted clubs (they tend to be the heaviest). As you gently push the clubs down through impact, the extra weight and momentum they create help your arms extend.

Why is this important? It helps maximise the radius of your swing and also helps you find the bottom or lowest part of your downswing. To hit good iron shots, contact with the ball should be just before the bottom of the swing or arc.

Note: To hit the ball out of the middle with your driver, contact with the ball should be just after the bottom of the swing to allow the middle of the face or sweet spot and the middle of the ball to match up.

Picture perfect pitches

I KNOW MY 'BOUNCE BOARD' WILL SCARE NERVY CHIPPERS – BUT TRUST ME, IT WILL WORK FOR YOU.

THE JARGON If there's nonsense spoken about bunker play, it's five times worse for pitching. We all know poor pitchers who've resorted to the 'safe' way: ball back in the stance, hands forward, weight forward, shaft leaning to the hole, club's sole sitting flat on the turf, hitting down, steep angle of attack...

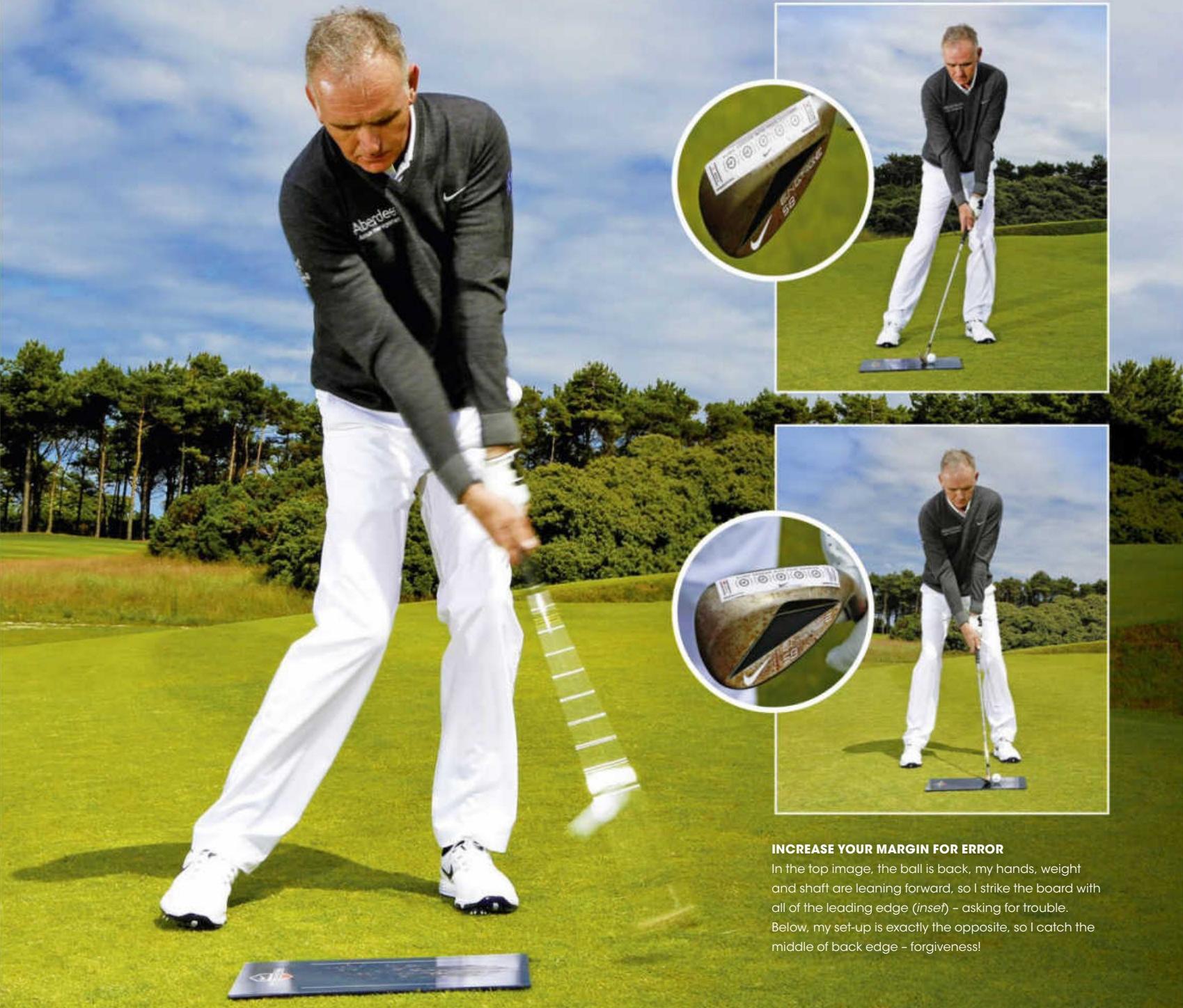
THE SENSE This may look scary but trust me, it will revolutionise your short game. This is called a lie board, used by club fitters, but I use it as a 'bounce board'. To bad pitchers, this is a 'don't watch alone horror movie'. I get that, but trust me, it

isn't. I'm going to prove that all you need do is remember to use the sole's bounce. Just use it the way it was designed to be used. Do that and your nervy, flicky and scoopy efforts will disappear.

I've put some tape on the sole of my wedge (14° bounce). If the hands are too far forward, or the ball too far back, the loft is reduced and the bounce disappears. The leading edge will dig into the turf/board, the sole tape will be marked along the leading edge ... and the ball might just go a bit further than your divot!

We want the strike point to be at the back

of the sole/bounce and about one centimetre wide, right about where the Nike 'swoosh' is on the tape. This lets you maintain loft and bounce and minimises interaction between club and turf. But you can forget that mildly technical talk – all I want you to do is focus on ensuring the back of the sole meets the turf as you push the club down through the ball. Do that and you can actually afford to hit as far as an inch behind the ball! Keep the back edge low and it will glide across the turf, providing a huge margin for error. The leading edge gets you into trouble, the back edge gets you out of it.



INCREASE YOUR MARGIN FOR ERROR

In the top image, the ball is back, my hands, weight and shaft are leaning forward, so I strike the board with all of the leading edge (*inset*) – asking for trouble. Below, my set-up is exactly the opposite, so I catch the middle of back edge – forgiveness!



Pure strikes for better lag putts

VISUALISE THE VERTICAL ARC.

THE JARGON The putting stroke is like a pendulum. Rock your shoulders. Take it straight back and straight through. Low and slow. Don't lift your head. Don't do this, don't do that ... If we spent our lives thinking 'don't' we'd be scared to get out of bed of a morning.

THE SENSE I like the stroke as a subtle vertical arc where we strike the ball just after the arc's lowest point, rather than a horizontal rounded arc. It greatly increases our chances of striking the ball more often with the sweet spot and pointing the face at our start line at impact. So I want you to remember the left-hand picture here, the black arc illustrating the stroke that gets the ball rolling nicely. Turning the training aid on its side (right image) shows a horizontal arc I'd discourage.

Hole out like a champion

PRACTISE WITH A TENNIS BALL TO NAIL MORE SIX-FOOTERS.

THE JARGON Again, there is a lot of talk about what we should and shouldn't do on shorter putts and the closer we get to the hole, the more pressure we put on ourselves to hole them. As a result, we tend to try not to hit bad putts rather than focusing on hitting good putts. Now everyone is agonising over whether to copy Jordan Spieth's 'look at the hole' method. Well, try this easy drill before you start thinking of something as revolutionary.

THE SENSE Putting may not be quite as bad as the long game as far as myths are concerned but we can simplify this process even further. All this drill requires is a putter, a tennis ball and a hole.

By doing a bit of practice with a tennis ball, it puts a premium on striking the ball with a square face. Get it right with a tennis ball, which is only just smaller than the hole and your putting with a golf ball will improve dramatically.

Firstly, the hole looks massive and secondly, if you can strike a tennis ball with the sweetspot, doing it with a golf ball will be a breeze.

Another great drill is to start and finish every practice putting session by holing six short putts. Practise success not failure. Get used to the sight and sound of the ball going into the hole.



NEW BALLS!

Looks easy doesn't it? Try it and find out for yourself: believe me, it will improve the quality of your strikes.



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Get in the hole!

BETTER PUTTING IS THE FAST WAY TO LOWER SCORES.
GARETH JOHNSTON SHOWS HOW TO IMPROVE YOURS.

WORDS: GARETH JOHNSTON WITH JOE DOWNES
PHOTOGRAPHY: BOB ATKINS

Practice for most amateurs is hitting a basket of balls at the range once a week, going through your irons and woods before heading home after an hour of mixed results. Putting practice is either neglected completely or amounts to rolling a handful of balls 15 minutes before your tee-time. This is completely the wrong approach.

Working on and maintaining a sound putting stroke is the fastest route to lowering your scores.

I am not telling you to adopt a Tour pro's attitude and spend hours on the putting green every week. But investing just a little time at home or the course in your set-up and stroke will shave three or four shots off your round.

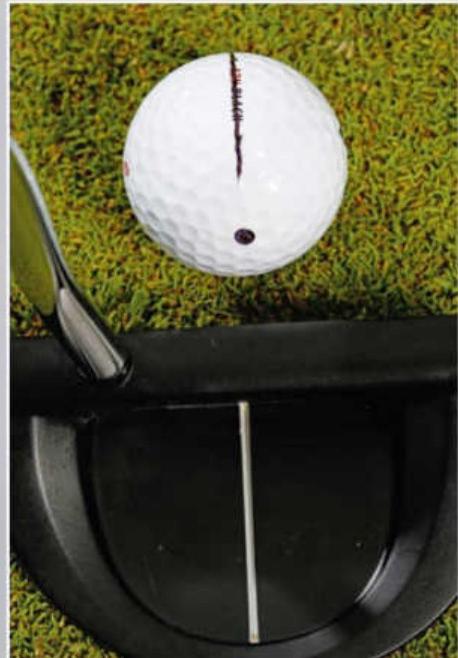
I'll show you how to do it.



1 Get the basics right

Everyone's putting routine and stroke is slightly different, but however you do it, getting the fundamentals right is crucial if you want to hole your fair share. Things we take for granted like stance, ball position and alignment can all slip if you don't work to maintain them.

BALANCE POINT: Your weight should be through the arches of your feet. You can practise by standing on an umbrella or a shaft and keeping your balance. This ensures your centre of gravity can remain fixed and therefore the strike on the blade has a greater chance of being consistent.



FOCUS POINT

Your eyes have great dominance over where the blade strikes the ball. This is crucial when the margins are so small in putting. If you're looking all over the ball throughout the stroke, your strike point is bound to change. To keep it constant, focus on the same point every time. This might be a dimple, a blade of grass, or a dot on the ball. Don't watch the blade as these wondering eyes will hinder your impact point.

BALL BELOW LEFT EYE

This ensures the leading edge of the putter is in the centre of your stance, helping you hit up on the ball slightly for a great roll.

2 Get your grip right

Why do you hold the putter the way you do? Whenever I ask most people that question, it's because they copied someone else – a relative, friend or Tour player. But that tried and

trusted grip may not be your best option. Think about your stroke and where you tend to miss before trying one of these options, which some of the Tour's best putters use.



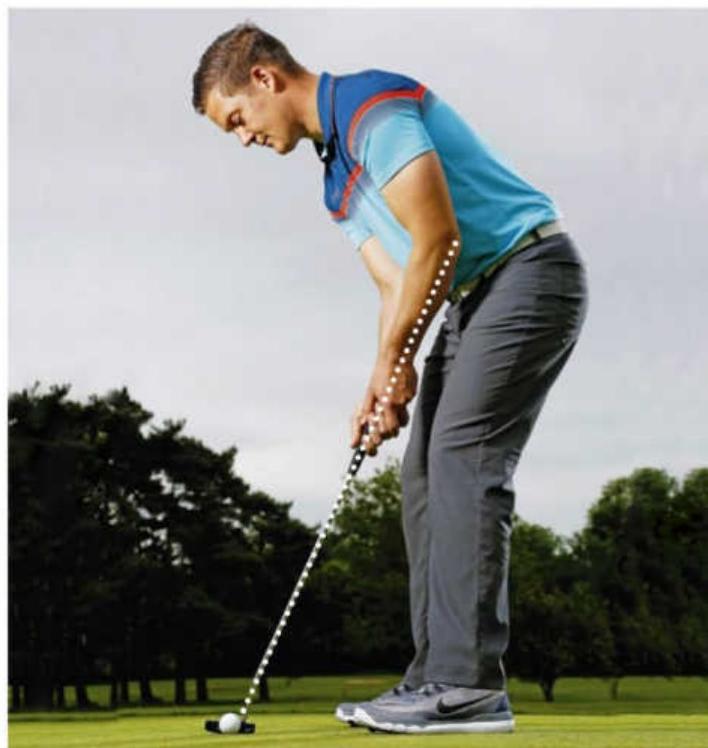
RIGHT BELOW LEFT ... LIKE RORY: This is the option for the person who likes to let the putter release slightly as the bottom hand helps to promote some rotation of the clubface within the stroke. If you tend to push putts, or leave the face open, give this a try and feel the clubface rotate a little and return to square at impact.



LEFT BELOW RIGHT ... LIKE JORDAN: If you struggle with closing the face too much and pull putts, or simply like to feel as though you putt with minimal face rotation, this will keep your lead wrist firmer and the face squarer. Make sure the lead wrist is flat, with the grip end of the club maintaining its distance to the forearm through the stroke.



OPEN PALM: This is a great 'anti-yip' grip for anyone who tends to hit at the ball with a stroke that is not smooth. Keep your top hand in position and guide the putter with the thumb and forefinger of the bottom hand.



WHATEVER YOU DO ... Keep your lead arm in unison with the shaft. This will reduce the 'angles' within your stroke and allow for fewer moving parts, and so fewer compensatory movements. If you can't do this the chances are your putter is the wrong length for you.

3 Use your instincts

A free-flowing stroke that allows the ball to find the middle of the face is the recipe for success. I see too many people getting bogged down with their putting action and over-complicating things – swinging to set points depending on distance, despite a range of variables (i.e. green speed, slope, green quality, etc.)

is a classic example. This easy, four-step method is a great way of freeing up the stroke and works on any length of putt. Count as fast as the second hand on a watch ticks. To help you in practice, say it under your breath, remembering you strike the ball on the count of four.

1. Look at the hole



2. Then at the ball

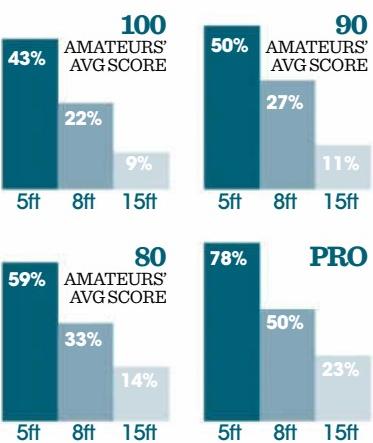




RISE ANGLE: Practising with a tennis ball is really effective. You can't hit the bottom of the ball as that causes it to skid and bounce in the air. You should feel as though you are brushing up on the ball to get it to roll properly, like rolling a tyre across the ground.

Your putting stats

Professor Mark Broadie of Columbia University invented the 'strokes gained – putting statistic' used on the US PGA Tour and authored the book *Every Shot Counts*. His extensive research revealed the percentage of putts golfers of different scoring standards really hole from five feet, eight feet and 15 feet. How do your putting stats compare?



How many putts should you take?

Is your putting above or below average? It's hard to know, but Dr Lucius Riccio, of Columbia University, has studied 'average golfers' for the book *Golf: The Scientific Way to get the answer*. Here is the average number of putts per total score in a round.

| Round score | Ave puts |
|-------------|----------|
| 95 | 37.0 |
| 91 | 35.7 |
| 89 | 35.0 |
| 85 | 33.7 |
| 81 | 32.0 |
| 79 | 31.7 |
| 75 | 30.3 |
| 71 | 29.0 |

4 Groove your stroke

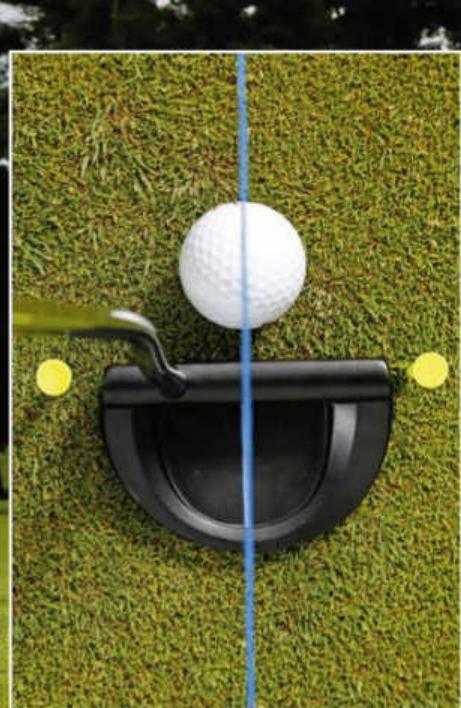
This is the best stroke-building station as it tests every area of your putting action – eyeline, path, face angle and alignment. I urge you to go and buy a string line as they prove to be incredibly cost-effective! Setting it up just a short distance from the hole and working with it for just a few minutes will tell you so much.

THROUGH THE GATE

Set a gate fractionally wider than your putter head using two tees and pass the head through it. Unless you're delivering the face square and hitting the middle, you'll hit one of the tees.

SHOWS THE ARC

You will putt with a slight arc and the line will show this as the putterhead moves away from it on the way back, comes back to it at impact and moves inside again on the way through.



EYELINE: The string should split the ball in half as you look down if your eyeline is correctly over the ball.



5 Useful drills

Having built a solid set-up and honed a sharp stroke, trying a few drills is a great way of backing up the work you've already done and building skills like feel and pace control. Here are four really effective ones

I get my students to use all the time. If you go to the practice green at a tournament you'll see the world's best players doing the same things. Try them next time you're on the practice green.



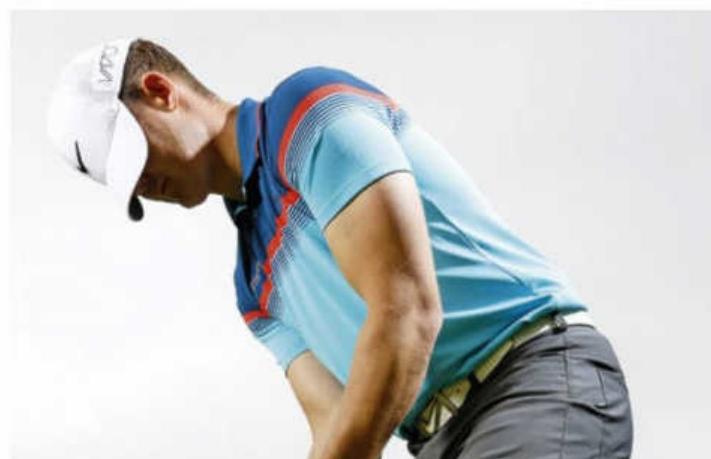
OPEN HANDS: Hitting putts this way helps you feel the correct release of the putterhead as you have to work harder to deliver it square. This shows the correct face movement required and how quiet the hands need to be.



MIRROR: This is an essential bit of kit for me. They are really easy to use and get you set up perfectly in no time. They have a multitude of uses and like the string line, are a must-have piece of kit. You can buy them from the big golf retailers.



FACE ANGLE: This drill tells you what an open and closed face feels like. Set-up to hole the putt and try to hit the right (open face) and left (closed face) pegs by manipulating the face. This comes from the same path each time. You will then find understanding how to square the face at impact much easier.



EYES CLOSED: Trying to hole putts with your eyes closed or a cap over your face is a great way of building feel for pace as well as eliminating that 'hit' at the ball. You will very quickly feel that the ball is simply 'in the way' of a very smooth stroke and if you do hit at the ball it will become evident immediately.

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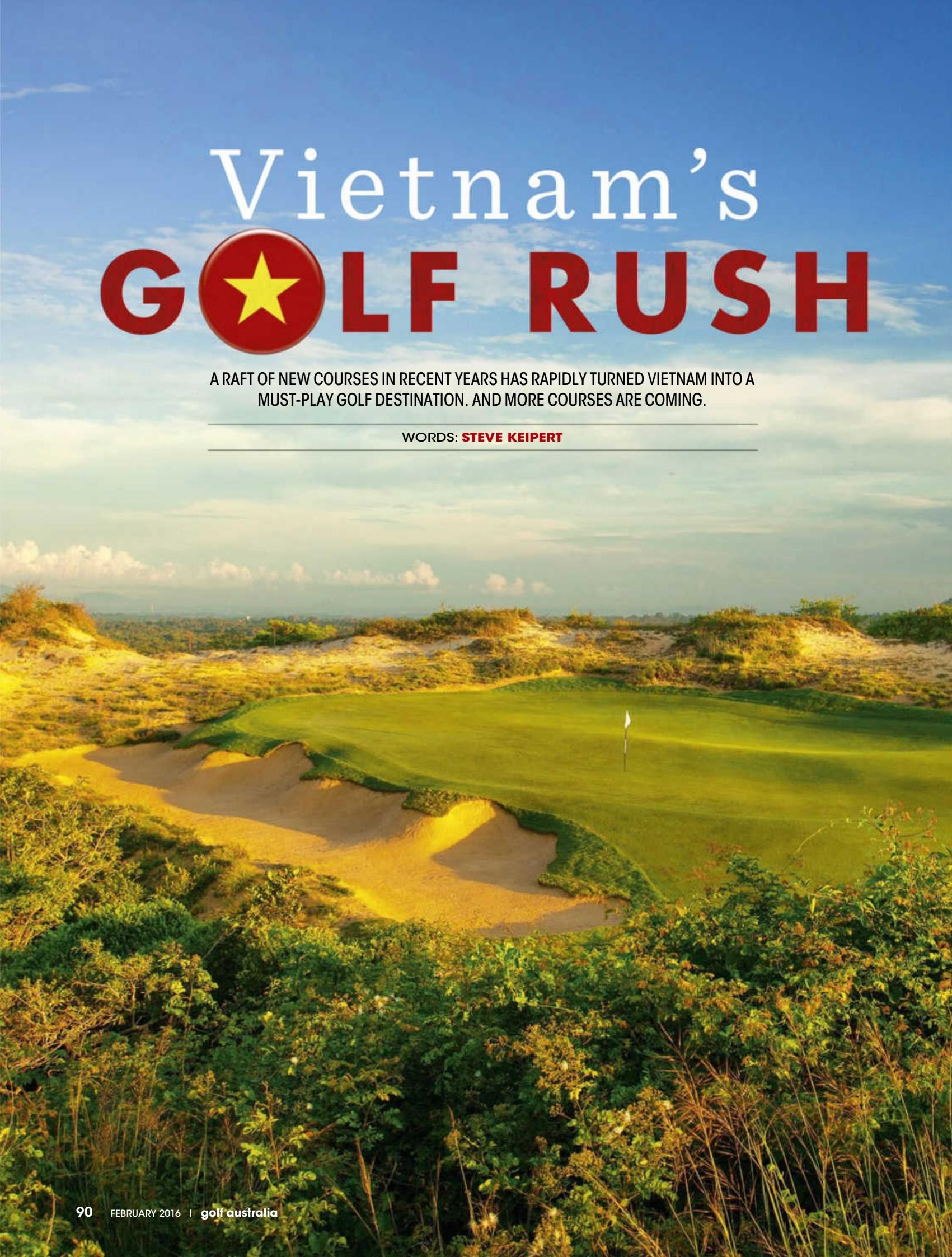
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Vietnam's **GOLF RUSH**



A RAFT OF NEW COURSES IN RECENT YEARS HAS RAPIDLY TURNED VIETNAM INTO A MUST-PLAY GOLF DESTINATION. AND MORE COURSES ARE COMING.

WORDS: STEVE KEIPERT



The exceptional Greg Norman-designed Bluffs course on Vietnam's southern coast utilises a rare strip of sandy terrain.

Viетnam made its first major contribution to golf without even realising it.

Tiger Woods' famous moniker has its origins in the South Vietnamese jungle, stemming from Colonel Vuong Dang "Tiger" Phong, who Earl Woods befriended during his time serving in the Vietnam War – or the American War as Vietnamese people quite justifiably prefer us to refer to it. When Eldrick Tont Woods entered the world four decades ago, it would be the nickname of the deputy province chief for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam that the golf world would come to know him by.

These days, Vietnam's influence on golf is more defined. While Michael Tran, a winner last year on the Asian Development Tour, is the only Vietnamese male golfer with enough points to sustain an official world ranking at 812th, the country is the new must-go destination for great golf in an appealing location. The combination of stunning landscapes and designs plus an inviting climate and a welcoming environment that offers a side serving of cultural and culinary exploration is difficult to surpass.

Vietnam has about 35 courses, roughly a third of which have been constructed during the golf explosion of the past decade. The government has decreed it will permit a total of 109 courses by 2020. That figure remains ambitious but it does indicate a level of support for the game from a high level. Vietnam has 15,000 golfers, so international players remain a key to its future, making it this century's version of Thailand, which began drawing fascinated Australians and golfers from other countries from the 1980s. However, the differences between the two nations are not insignificant. Vietnam offers greater variety in climate and settings, more sophisticated course architecture plus surroundings that are less gritty and seedy.

In generations to come, Vietnamese golfers may well be viewed in the light that we view Thai golfers today: a diverse country that gave us an array of wonderful tropical golf courses that will surely eventually spawn a legion of top professionals.

SAND IN THE DEEP SOUTH

If you want a complete picture of Vietnam it is important to see its north, south and centre. The same maxim holds true for the country's golf courses. Each region varies markedly and so too does the golf scene.

In the south, no golf course can compare to **The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip**, which is unlike any other layout in South-East Asia. The site alone on the south coast sets it apart, as the sandy dunes and varied topography give the course a unique but normally paradoxical pairing of links landform in a tropical setting. Consequently, The Bluffs has more character and versatility than most courses usually associated with the region. Opening in October 2014 and designed by Greg Norman, The Bluffs hosted the Asian Tour's inaugural Ho Tram Open in December, which saw Sergio Garcia prevail in a field that also included major winners Geoff Ogilvy and Darren Clarke.

What strikes first-timers is the endless chain of dunes and the amount of waste-style sand in play. Peering across the layout from the clubhouse on the high point of the property, the eye catches as much white as it does the green ribbons of fairway. Once on the course, however, there is more width to nearly every hole than is perhaps first apparent. Likewise, the extent of the contouring reveals itself as the round progresses. Many green complexes are shaped to help gather balls towards the flag and I found myself trying wherever possible to read the greens before striking my approach shot in order to avoid leaving myself difficult putts up and over the ridges in The Bluffs' greens.

Norman has excelled in delivering a course that is genuinely one-of-a-kind in style. There's the sand to complicate matters and jungle-like scrub off the fairways to swallow wide misses but most holes offer adequate space and multiple playing lines. The par-71 course is not long at just on 7,000 yards from the back tees, although the forward sets of tees reduce the journey significantly. There is some 'hidden' length in that at least nine holes play uphill to the green and not nearly that many move downhill. The greens are large and most are segmented to often help collect good shots while also make long putting difficult.

It's not easy to label a standout hole at The Bluffs, nor a weak one. The 1st is a gentle opener but is far from bad before the 2nd begins the journey of



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The short but fiendish 4th hole at The Bluffs; Climbing to The Bluff's 14th green; A downhill and driveable par-4 at No. 12 at The Bluffs with the Grand Ho Tram Strip resort beyond; Laguna Lang Co's long and sand-lined par-4 17th hole.

ups and downs across and through the dunes. There are fantastic vistas from multiple points, few better than the back tee on the par-4 8th, a strategic hole defined by a split fairway with a pond and long bunker in between the right and left avenues and one of the many greens with high shoulders to feed balls towards the centre. On the back nine, the most demanding hole is the 15th, a long uphill par-3 that reaches as far as 235 metres, a mighty wallop considering the elevation change.

There are plans to expand the golf offerings across the Ho Tram region, which would give visiting players cause to stay longer at the magnificent and adjoining Grand Resort Ho Tram Strip. Ogilvy almost certainly used his appearance in the Ho Tram Open to scout a potential site for his design associates. Watch this space.

FRONT AND CENTRE

Danang has become 'golf central' in Vietnam in recent years, literally and figuratively. The city on the central coast of the country is home to a million people and four top-class layouts, none of which existed seven years ago. Interestingly, microclimates prevalent in the region led to three different grass types. Danang Golf Club features Bermuda Tifdwarf greens with Evergreen Bermuda everywhere else, Montgomerie Links is Sea Isle Supreme paspalum and Laguna Lang Co uses TifEagle. If there's a common architectural theme to the region, it's heavy green contours, not in the form of steep tiers or isolated lobes but rather high shoulders that either hide a corner of the putting surface or repel balls away from certain pin positions.

Laguna Lang Co Golf Club is in a sense a microclimate in itself, with open lakeside holes flowing to narrow jungle-lined passages before the journey leads to a beachside stretch and heavily bunkered tests. Playing 18 holes there feels like many more courtesy of the diversity of the settings. A Sir Nick Faldo layout, the Englishman has added elements of links golf to the design of some holes with the odd unbunkered green where running shots are invited, or contouring and shaping to favour shots that hug the ground.

With mountains on one side and the sea on the other, Laguna Lang Co is as scenic and beautiful as it is interesting to play. Faldo and his team utilised the landscape in clever ways, as several times throughout the round an approach shot will hang in the air against a mountainous backdrop, holding against the giant green canvas for a moment before plummeting towards the target.

The holes appear narrower than they are thanks to the intimidating dense jungle lining most fairways, however in reality the landing areas are adequately broad from the appropriate tee markers. Several greens feature scoops and swales to sling balls away from the flag and often off the green all together, while most of the putting surfaces contain small tiers or ripples to guide shots to certain areas.

Choosing a defining hole is difficult at Laguna Lang Co because of the changing styles and scenery, however the par-3 11th captures most golfers' imaginations. For starters, it's one hole where the concrete cart waiting bay is not directly beside the tee as instead you walk along a short track past imposing boulders to a secluded set of tees tucked into the edge of



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: One of Laguna Lang Co's friendly caddies; Laguna's seaside 9th hole; The iconic 16th at Danang Golf Club; High above stunning Angsana Lang Co.



the jungle. The entire 167-yard hole is in fact within its own pocket of forest along with the long, narrow green bordered by more boulders, one of which is a mere pace off the green. Ricochets are common when the flag is in the rear third, sometimes costing players balls and shots but occasionally rescuing a miscue.

Earlier, the 9th hole provides the only taste of the seaside location with the short par-4 played in full view of the South China Sea to the left. The next is a long par-4 split in two by an unkempt mound in the middle of the fairway then a creek in front of the large, rumpled green. These holes are isolated and imaginative in arguably the most attractive part of the course.

The attached Angsana Lang Co resort is a sight to behold in itself. From its tranquil location at the base of the Truong Son mountains to the 300-metre swimming pool that wends its way through the complex to the eclectic dining options, the resort provides just as much of an idyllic retreat as the golf course. For those looking for that extra luxury, the Banyan Tree hotel elevates the views and setting to another level with villas perched into the hillside high above the lapping waves of the beach below.

Ba Na Hills Golf Course is the newest addition to the Danang golf scene, preparing to open on March 1. Officially the layout is the first course designed by former World No.1 Luke Donald, but in reality it is from the pens of IMG's golf design arm.

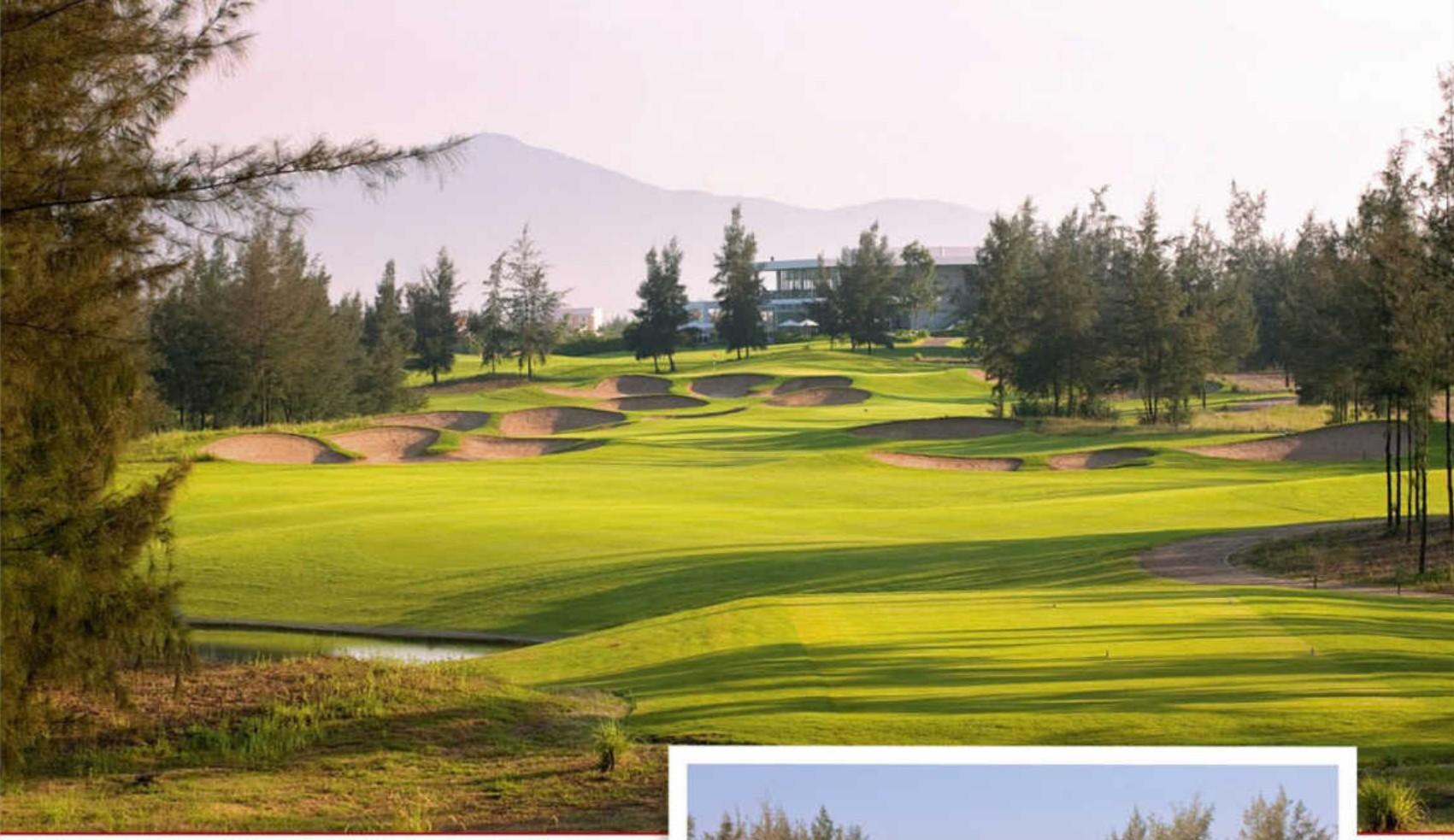
Where Laguna Lang Co mixes seaside with mountains and the other Danang courses are closer to the water, Ba Na Hills is all mountainous. Elevation changes, mesmerising backdrops, strategically placed streams

and bold bunkering are the features of the nascent layout, which will simply force touring golfers to stay in the area longer. And that's a good thing.

Danang's climate varies more than most tropical locations. The winter months will see maximum temperatures that remain in the teens but there remains a distinct wet season and a hot, humid summer. Korean, Chinese and Japanese golfers, in particular, flock to Danang from November to February, which is considered the peak season. The height of summer might be oppressive, but for Australian golfers Danang offers heat when warmth becomes hard to find at home.

It's also an intriguing place to explore away from the golf courses. Danang was the site of the first American air base during the war and the disused helicopter bunkers you pass heading from the city centre towards the two main golf courses serve as a reminder of the combat. Make sure you include time to visit the World Heritage-listed town of Hoi An, 30 minutes' drive south, with its remarkable Japanese Bridge, buzzing markets and vibrant energy.

Norman's design work at **Danang Golf Club** bears a distinct resemblance to the Melbourne Sandbelt in places, while also apparent are elements of his handiwork on the East course at The Grange club in Adelaide. The degree of the undulations is similar but mostly the sandy nature of the site, plus the blow-out bunkers, bumps and hollows draw the comparisons. Some golfers have commented that a handful of holes at Danang appear too similar, which is superficially true, but they're missing the subtle on-ground differences hole to hole and instead seeing only the



Montgomerie Links' 12th hole (above) has received multiple accolades, including the best par-5 in Vietnam. The club's par-3 11th (right) is also a tester, rising to a green with plenty of break across the broad surface.

swathes of casuarina trees and sandy waste areas that line most of the fairways.

One hole that could never be accused of being a 'cookie-cutter' design is the par-3 16th. This is the iconic hole at not just Danang Golf Club but also the region: a 135-metre journey with the sea and Cham Islands as a backdrop. It's as picturesque as it is demanding – and I'm certainly blaming the distracting view for four-putting...

Earlier, you'll find more top tests at the strong par-4 3rd, the bunker-strewn downhill par-3 8th, the par-5 10th that snakes between the dunes and the brutally long par-4 13th, which straddles that line between being a big par-4 or a short par-5. The closing hole is similar and asks for two cavalier shots in order to set up a birdie putt.

Danang often gets the vote for being the pick of the courses in the region, but it's entirely down to personal preference. However, if a shortage of time permits you only one round in Danang, make it here. I would also suggest the course owns the best set of greens across the region. The Tifdwarf surfaces are perfect for firmness and pace, which can be hard to achieve in the tropics.

Almost adjacent is **Montgomerie Links**, which gets credit in my book for being the first of the Danang courses to materialise, thus sparking the emergence of golf in the region. It might lack the grandiose setting of its sister courses but it does provide a stellar layout on fine paspalum surfaces. Colin Montgomerie and his design colleagues opted for fairways that are wider and for the rough beside them to be kept shorter than at The Bluffs and Laguna Lang Co. Yet it is far from a pushover. The layout is longer and bunkers play a starring role on more holes, plus there are plenty of lakes and ponds thrown in.

The front nine is mostly straightforward outside of the nefarious little 5th hole, a short par-3 across water. The wet stuff appears easy to carry as it ends well short of the green, yet anything not covering the entire distance from the tee to the front fringe of the green will catch a steep downslope and be sent rapidly back towards the water, as I discovered. Twice.



The second nine captures the imagination, with more of the site's natural assets on show. Casuarina trees are a feature across Montgomerie Links and in many instances off the fairways balls will gather on the needles dropped by the trees, creating the chance to craft artful escapes after a wild shot.

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Saigon holds Vietnam's economic centre but the nation's cultural heart beats in Hanoi. The capital city and northern hub is often referred to as the Paris of the Orient, and touring the streets it's easy to see why. With treelined thoroughfares, lakes and parks, plus a fantastic Old Quarter to explore, there is a definite Parisian feel in places.

Life on the streets of Vietnam is tantalisingly hectic. There's a frenzied intermingling of bikes, cars, buses, trucks and pedestrians on the roads with a hierarchy based on size. When crossing the road, we were advised to let the motorcycles veer around us but that anything larger simply won't, pedestrian crossing or not. It's like organised chaos but somehow it works.

Our time in Hanoi included a day at the 36-hole **Sky Lake Resort and Golf Club**, where the Lake is the members' course and the newer Sky layout remains public. It's located about a 50-minute drive south-west of the city in an enclave of golf courses amid a semi-rural region. Designed by Ahn Moon Hwan from Bori Golf Design, Sky Lake was recently voted the Best Championship Course in Vietnam for 2015.

The scenery is alluring, with the limestone outcrops of Van Son rising in

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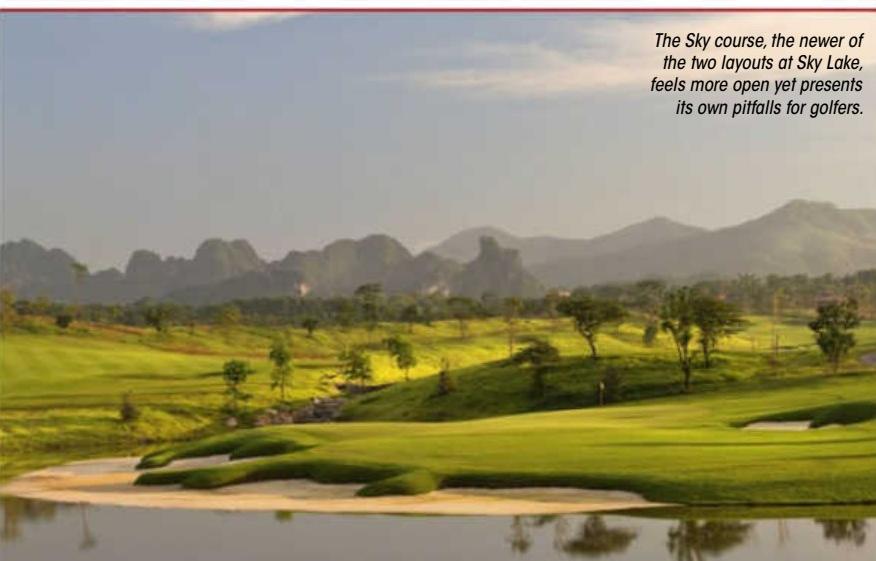
*The Lake course at Sky
Lake winds through
patches of thick jungle.*

the golfer's eyeline beyond the course in what is a Halong Bay-like setting. Conversely, Hanoi is visible in the distance on clear days.

Sky Lake offers stark elevation changes with several heroic carries for the brave or more benign avenues for the timid. Both courses have an uncanny knack of disguising how much width many holes possess. The uphill and downhill tee shots tend to visually highlight the lakes, bunkers and 'junk' off to the side rather than revealing the full extent of safe ground. Yet several times on both layouts the examination is stiff and sometimes alternate paths reveal themselves. For instance at the par-4 5th hole of the Sky course, my caddie brought my driver and hybrid to the tee, which looking ahead of us I viewed to be an odd pair of clubs to decide between. Only once I'd hit the driver did I realise there was a second way of playing the hole that involved a more conservative tee shot. A shorter drive that hugs the lake on the left opens up a better angle to many pin positions, although hitting driver means finding the broader expanse of cut grass but a more acute angle across the water to the green. It's rare to find a hole that rewards the shorter shot and No.5 certainly piqued my interest.

Any sense of conservatism goes out the door on the Lake course. Many of Sky Lakes' most grandiose tee shots fall on its original layout, such as the 10th hole that descends and slings right across a ravine of vegetation so dense I doubt any ball has ever been retrieved from its clutches. The vistas might be marginally better on the Lake course but together the pair offer repeated and resplendent views of the region whichever one you are able to play.

The club holds links with Crowne Plaza West Hanoi, which is perfectly positioned within the city to provide an easy access point to Sky Lake, while also being close to the primary tourist attractions within Hanoi. And you will want to explore much more than just the growing array of excellent golf courses, as it's impossible to visit Vietnam without reflecting on its past and pondering its prospects. Here's a country with an amazing history, both excruciatingly sad and enlightening. But there's no reason why golf can't play a key role in its future.



*The Sky course, the newer of
the two layouts at Sky Lake,
feels more open yet presents
its own pitfalls for golfers.*

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HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON):

Sofitel Plaza Hotel (www.sofitel.com/Vietnam)

HO TRAM: The Grand Ho Tram Strip (www.thegrandhotram.com)

DANANG: Angsana Lang Co (www.angsana.com/en/ap-vietnam-lang-co);

Banyan Tree (www.banyantree.com);

Pullman Resort (www.pullman-danang.com)

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REASONS WHY **TASMANIA** MUST BE ON YOUR **TRAVEL BUCKET LIST**

WORDS & COURSE PHOTOGRAPHY: BRENDAN JAMES

1

MAKE no mistake, if you are undecided where to go for your next golfing holiday or extended weekend away with a group of mates, put Tasmania at the top of your list.

The Apple Isle was recently named the 'Undiscovered Golf Destination of the Year' at the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) awards – an award voted on by more than 200 of the world's leading golf travel journalists from 36 countries.

Tasmania snared the award in front of 60 other nominated destinations from around the world, with judges basing their decision on the extent of which the golfing destination is undiscovered, attractiveness of the region and courses, speed of play, climate and accessibility.

So the secret is out. Tasmania is a great place to visit and play golf. It's something I have known for a long time and here are the 18 (a good golfing number) reasons why I think you need to add Tasmania to your golf travel bucket list ... sooner, rather than later.

1. BARNBOUGLE DUNES

No golfing trip to Tasmania is complete without a visit Barnbougle Dunes.

Barnbougle Dunes put Tasmania on the international golfing map for golfers within months of opening in 2004.

It has been ranked Australia's No.1 Public Access Course by Golf Australia magazine ever since and continues to hold down No.2 spot in our rank of the nation's Top-100 Courses.

Located near the seaside town of Bridport, about 70 minutes' drive north east of Launceston, Barnbougle Dunes was designed by American Tom Doak in collaboration with Mike Clayton. It is a brilliant layout that encapsulates all that is fun and challenging about links golf.

When Barnbougle Dunes opened, some questioned its viability saying it was too isolated to attract enough golfers to succeed. Those critics have since been proven dead wrong. Its subsequent success has been based on the model of providing world-class golf on spectacular land and no matter how isolated golfers will come. That ideal led to the development of the neighbouring Lost Farm course and was undoubtedly something looked at by those behind the creation of the two new King Island courses.

2. BARNBOUGLE LOST FARM

No golfer who tees it up at Barnbougle Dunes should go home without playing Barnbougle Lost Farm next door.

The opening of Barnbougle Lost Farm in 2010 further transformed the six-kilometre stretch of Tassie coastline into a powerhouse golf destination. In this writer's opinion, Barnbougle's appeal to golfers far and wide is the fact that both courses fully complement each other.

While both offer their own spectacular golfing attributes and visually striking memories, a poll of golfers who have played both would probably find the votes almost split down the middle as to which course was their favourite.

Where Barnbougle Dunes offers one visually dramatic hole after another, the Bill Coore-designed Lost Farm combines the spectacular with holes that place the highest possible value on good strategy and

shot execution from tee-to-green.

Lost Farm's quality has been vindicated many times in its short history. It has been ranked at No.2 (just behind Barnbougle Dunes) in Golf Australia's ranking of the Top-100 Public Access Courses since making its debut in 2011. Last month, it was ranked No.4 in our list of the nation's Top-100 Courses.

Unlike Barnbougle Dunes where many of the fairways twist and turn across the flattest land between high dunes, Lost Farm's fairways weave through much wider valleys.

3. KING ISLAND WONDERS

The opening of Cape Wickham links and Ocean Dunes last October has put King Island on the world golfing map.

Any golfer who has ever experienced hot golf destinations like California's Monterrey Peninsula, Bandon Dunes on the Oregon coast, the south west of Ireland or the great Scottish links, will be impressed by these wonder courses.

Last month, Cape Wickham's 18 holes debuted in Golf Australia's ranking of the nation's Top-100 Courses at No.5 and will undoubtedly move higher as its playing surfaces mature.

Designed by American Mike De Vries in collaboration with Darius Oliver, Cape Wickham easily realises the great expectations of what was anticipated from such a wonderful piece of golfing land on the island's north-west tip.

It is an outstanding routing, which features eight holes set right alongside the jagged coastline and another two where any approach shot is played toward an ocean backdrop. You can see Bass Strait from every hole. Some holes sit high above the sea, on others you can almost feel the sea spray as you peg your ball on the tee. There are holes built across rocky promontories and others, like the soon-to-become-iconic par-4 18th hole, where a beach lies at the edge of the fairway and is in play for the misadventurous.

Located just north of Currie and less than five minutes' drive from King Island airport, Ocean Dunes covers idyllic golfing terrain with fairways that rollover over and weave between sand dunes, with several holes laid alongside its two-kilometre stretch of ocean frontage.

Ocean Dunes opened its front nine holes in late October and the remaining holes are due to open later this month. Designed by Graeme Grant, the spectacular layout opens with a 500-metre par-5 that rises over the crest of a hill as it veers right – around a massive bunker cut out of a dune – between some tall dunes and plunges down to the green set against the edge of the rocky shore.

The shortest of Ocean Dunes' holes will be some of the most talked about by players post-round. The 130-metre par-3 4th hole is played across an ocean inlet with rocky edges on both sides of the water. The tee is perched just above the waves, while the expansive putting surface is very wide and features a bunker cut into the middle of the front edge. This pinches the target to its narrowest and has the effect of almost creating two greens, left and right of the bunker.

Another ocean crossing opens the back nine, with the long par-3 10th hole. From the back pegs, the hole stretches to 210 metres and is slightly uphill. Thankfully there are several tees on each hole, making



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this course playable for all golfers. In the case of the 10th hole, the prevailing wind coming from behind will help on most days but it will challenge your ability to choose the right club.

And don't forget King Island's original layout, a superb nine-hole seaside course just south of the Currie main street that many believe is one of, if not, the best in the country.

4. FOOD, GLORIOUS, FOOD

Tasmania has established a widely held reputation for its fine food, using high quality fresh produce created from its rich soil, pure air and clean waters.

Awesome seafood, like its renowned scallops and lobsters, to succulent oysters are a must try for any visitor to Tasmania.

Any golfer heading to Barnbougle or King Island should do their tastebuds a favour and visit the local bakery. Bridport's Sugar and Spice bakery, about five minutes' drive from Barnbougle, is outstanding with great hand-made pies and a selection of pastry favourites. Likewise, the King Island Bakehouse, in the main street of Currie, is legendary for its cakes and pies made fresh on the premises every day. Choosing between a pie or irresistible cream bun or chocolate éclair might be a harder decision than any club selection out on the course.

5. GO BY SEA

Tasmania has never been easier, or more comfortable, to get to. While most will fly to Tassie, you can also drive your car onto the Spirit of Tasmania and sit back and relax for a cruise across Bass Strait.

Both ships have recently been fully refurbished with all passenger decks, including cabins, being remodelled.

There are three new bars and a self-service restaurant area, TMK – Tasmanian Market Kitchen – as well as luxurious additions including two new cinemas and a lounge area with new comfortable recliners, equipped with individual reading lights, tray table and USB port.

6. DEVONPORT WELCOME

If you venture to the Apple Isle via the Spirit of Tasmania, you can be on the 1st tee of a very good 18-hole layout within 15 minutes of disembarking in Devonport.

Devonport Golf Club has hosted 11 Tasmanian Open Championships, with winners including Geoff Ogilvy, Rohan Blizzard, Bill Dunk, Ian Stanley and Bob Stanton.

The visitor drives down an ordinary country lane, through narrow gates onto a 500-metre tree-lined driveway – not unlike the famous Magnolia Lane leading into Augusta National.

Designed by Vern Morcom and opened for play in 1961, Devonport is laid out on gently rolling, easy-walking terrain on a peninsula leading to the banks of the Mersey River.

This is a traditional bushland course so trees tightly flank many of the fairways, making birdies hard to come by. With most greens elevated slightly with steep slopes of each side, chipping and putting can also be tricky.

7. NORTH BY NORTHWEST

Heading west of Devonport along the coast, the driving is easy and there are several good golf courses to sample.

Ulverstone Golf Club is a hidden gem about 20 minutes' drive west of Devonport and can be a little tricky to locate in the hills away from the



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town centre, so make sure you follow the signs.

Designed by Al Howard, Ulverstone is a wonderfully undulating course that easily sits among the top-eight layouts in Tasmania and is perhaps the reason why it has hosted seven state and national championships in recent times.

While many of the other courses mentioned among these pages may be described as "heavily tree-lined", none come close to Ulverstone for sheer majesty in the size and number of trees that abound across the layout. This is hardly surprising considering the par-72 is surrounded by thick Tasmanian forest.

Venturing further westward, there is Seabrook GC (which is now a 16-hole course after a land sell-off), as well as the terrific nine-holer at Wynyard.

8. LAUNCESTON'S FOURSOME

The majority of interstate or overseas golf travelers en route to Barnbougle will fly into Launceston – the second largest city in Tasmania, behind the capital Hobart. It should come as no surprise then that this city of nearly 110,000 people also boasts four fine courses, all within a 15 minutes drive of the CBD.

Riverside Golf Club, just off the West Tamar Highway, is well regarded for the quality of its greens, while on the eastern side of the Tamar River, you will find Mowbray Golf Club, a layout covering far more dramatic topography that gives rise to some interesting holes and nice views of the city and the picturesque Tamar Valley.

Launceston Golf Club – located at Kings Meadow about halfway between the city and the airport – is the second oldest 18-hole layout in Tasmania and the fifth oldest in Australia having been

established in 1899.

The par-72 measures just 6,013 metres from the back markers but the challenge lies in keeping your ball on the fairway between the long stretches of heavily tree-lined rough. This is one reason why the club has successfully hosted many Tasmanian Open and Amateur championships.

Launceston has some very good holes but arguably the most memorable is the par-3 13th, known as 'Spine Cop'. At 157 metres from the championship pegs, it's not length that provides its main defence but it is the large wasteland in front of the green and the bunkers either side the putting surface that will penalise the mis-hit tee shot.

Bunkers are also a memorable feature of the Country Club Tasmania Resort course, 15 minutes' drive south of Launceston via the Bass Highway.

The Peter Thomson and Mike Wolveridge-designed course, which opened for play in 1982, features gum trees and pines lining relatively wide fairways. There are several water hazards and a significant number of bunkers scattered across the course, most of which have been renovated in recent times.

9. BACK IN TIME

Once you start travelling around to different golf courses throughout Tasmania, there is a name you will see with great regularity adorning honour boards far and wide.

The name Toogood, or more precisely, the Toogood family (of father Alf, and sons Peter and John) has had an enormous influence on the game in Tasmania – as players, teachers and course designers.

But perhaps the biggest ongoing contribution has come from Peter Toogood, who was instrumental in the foundation of the Australasian



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Golf Museum, ideally located at Bothwell – home of Australia's first known golf course – a scenic 50-minute drive north of Hobart in the beautiful Clyde River valley.

Housed in a heritage-listed schoolhouse, the museum is a must for any golf fan with interesting equipment exhibits – some dating back to the 1800s – photographs and paintings as well as donated equipment from some of our best players including Peter Thomson, Ian Baker-Finch, Mat Goggin, Graham Marsh and, of course, Peter Toogood.

10. DOWN ON THE FARM

One of the most important things you will see at the Australasian Golf Museum is how the game was first introduced to Australia – on a property known as 'Ratho', just a few minutes' drive out of Bothwell.

Scottish emigrant Alexander Reid played on Ratho Farm with featheries in the 1820s and three generations of Reids followed in their enjoyment of the course. The great-grandfather of Greg Ramsay, who played a major role in the formation of Barnbougle Dunes, purchased Ratho in 1936 and in recent years Ramsay has been working to restore the course to its true origins.

Like Prestwick in Scotland, the layout was once a 12-hole layout.

Starting from the homestead, six holes ran north of the shearing shed in a paddock, while another six holes headed south towards Bothwell, looping back to the homestead. The southern six holes became redundant for nearly half a century. Three were abandoned when play was resumed after the World War II as the club conformed with the country golf standard of nine holes. The other three holes were ploughed under in the early 1980s when a road and bridge were redirected alongside the old 1st hole. The ensuing government compensation was used to start restoration of the course and the lost six holes. Three new holes, designed by Neil Crafter and Paul Mogford at Golf Course Strategies, were built while some interesting and fun features of remaining holes, like bunkers, hedges and sheep yards, were reinstated.

A round at Ratho Golf Links is a memorable one because it is as if time has stopped and dropped you in the 1800s. There are plans to open further holes in the near future.

Adding to the Ratho experience is staying on the farm. The accommodation consists of several old farm buildings, which have been beautifully restored into luxury boutique rooms.

Each room is equipped with modern features but still retain interesting elements of the original masonry and carpentry. It is bed and breakfast farm stay accommodation with a difference.

11. SINGLE MALT

Perhaps the only industry in Tasmania that could rival the growth of golf tourism in the past two decades is the whisky industry.

For those golfers looking for links with the Home of Golf, look no further than playing a round of golf in the morning and sampling some single malt whiskies in the afternoon at one of the 14 distilleries now scattered around Tassie.



Play a round in paradise.

Take in breathtaking scenery while you tap in a birdie at Cape Wickham or Ocean Dunes, the spectacular new links courses on King Island. Just a forty-five minute flight from Melbourne, both courses curl around the island's gorgeous coastline, taking in rocky capes, isolated beaches, uncounted shipwrecks, a lonely lighthouse and stunning views of Bass Strait. Oh, and the gameplay is as rewarding as it is beautiful, with world-class holes that interface with the ocean like no other place on earth.

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Image credit: Cape Wickham



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One of the finest single malts to be found in Tassie comes from the Nant Distillery – a few minutes' drive from Rathon Farm just outside Bothwell. The Nant Estate dates back to 1821 and has been a commercial distillery since 2008 and, more recently, home to Australia's only Highland Single Malt whisky. If whisky is not your drop you might, however, enjoy the Nant Whisky BBQ Sauce...delicious!!

12. HIDDEN GEMS

The majority of Tasmania's golf courses are nine-hole layouts and there are some real hidden gems among them. Many of these smaller courses survive on the back of volunteer assistance, while a round might call for your green fee to be dropped in an honesty box at the clubhouse.

There are some 'hidden' nine-holers worthy of discovery and within an easy drive of Hobart. Tasman Golf Course is near Port Arthur with the most memorable hole being 'Cameron's Chasm' – the 124-metre uphill par-3 8th played from one cliff top to another with spectacular views towards Tasman National Park.

The Llanherne links shares a boundary with Hobart's airport and shares similar terrain as its more famous golfing neighbour, Royal Hobart Golf Club. In crafting the course at Seven Mile Beach, designer Peter Toogood was obviously inspired by his visits to the best of England's heathland courses and Scotland's links layouts as he oversaw the creation of Llanherne.

13. GET BACK TO NATURE

Tasmania is renowned for its vast areas of rugged wilderness and beautiful scenery. If you are in Hobart, you can have all this without packing a tent.

The 21-kilometre drive to the summit of Mt Wellington passes

through temperate rainforest to sub-alpine flora and glacial rock formations, ending in panoramic views of Hobart, Bruny Island, South Arm and the Tasman Peninsula.

No other city in Australia has a vista like it.

14. DERWENT VIEWS

There was a time not so very long ago that a Hobart holiday also meant a mandatory visit to the Cadbury chocolate factory at Claremont.

Unfortunately the company stopped its popular tours a few years ago, leaving a round of golf at neighbouring Claremont Golf Club as the suburb's top attraction.

The course lies on a peninsula and is surrounded on three sides by the Derwent River, about 20 minutes' drive north west of the CBD, and offers superb views across the water to Mt Wellington.

The river comes into play for the first time at the 174-metre par-3 2nd. It is a demanding hole that is further complicated by a small river inlet that cuts across the hole between tee and green. The target is small and, when the wind blows off the Derwent from the right, the green can be almost impossible to hit.

Work is due to begin soon on a residential development that will cover what is now the practice fairway and 18th hole. Some redesign of other holes will also be done to accommodate the new development.

15. SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

No visit to Hobart is complete without a browse through the Salamanca Markets that open every Saturday, which is perfect for the visiting golfer's schedule.

Salamanca Market has nearly 300 stallholders offering everything

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from hand-made Tasmanian pieces of woodwork and jewellery, to fancy glassware and ceramics as well as fresh fruit and organic vegetables, all accompanied by buskers and music.

The picturesque waterfront is not far away where you'll find fishing boats berthed alongside cruising yachts.

You will also find the high-speed ferry to take the 30-minute ride up the Derwent to the Museum of Old and New Art, or MONA, which is Australia's largest private museum. The collection ranges from ancient Egyptian mummies to some thought-provoking contemporary art.

16. TASMANIA RISING

No Australian course designer has come close to the impressive body of work created by Al Howard during eight decades in the game.

And the course regarded as his finest is the par-72 at Tasmania Golf Club, which was recently ranked No.80 in Golf Australia's list of the nation's Top-100 Courses.

Surrounded on three sides by the waters of Barilla Bay, the location might be spectacular but the landscape that faced Howard and then course superintendent Ian Grimsey was a wilderness of bracken, coastal wattle and other native scrub that covered sand dunes and sandstone outcrops. Once the scrub was cleared on Barilla Bluff, a rolling landscape was revealed, giving rise to some unique and

interesting holes.

The best known hole at Tasmania is the 528-metre par-5 3rd hole – once described by Jack Nicklaus as one of the most spectacular in Australia. Howard might have been paying homage to the famous 18th hole at Pebble Beach in California when he staked out the routing of this hole. With beautiful views of Barilla Bay and the surrounding countryside, the hole follows the bay in a gradual curve to the left and offers the option for long hitters of shortening the hole by smashing their drive over the corner. The hole has been made even better in recent times with the removal of trees separating the left edge of the fairway from the water, which reveals the green to the player standing on the tee.

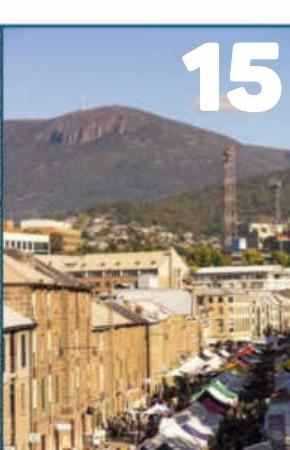
The wind is a constant at Tasmania and few holes are affected more than par-3 8th hole. The 159-metre hole is laid out across the end of the promontory and is susceptible to more breeze than most of the other holes that rise and fall through valleys and are heavily tree-lined. The hole is best played with a punch shot below the wind to find the green. Three bunkers left and a large bunker right complicate the approach shot, especially when the wind is whipping in off the water from the right.

While the undulating terrain and the natural holes laid across it is the outstanding feature at Tasmania, the nicely manicured bentgrass

PHOTOS: TOURISM TASMANIA X 3; JOHN MILBOURNE (TOP)



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playing surfaces really add to the memorable golfing experience here.

17. ROYAL SUITE

This year marks the centenary of Royal Hobart Golf Club and 60 years since it moved to its current site at Seven Mile Beach.

The club has been in existence for 120 years but the expansion of Hobart forced it from the eastern shore of the Derwent River and off to Seven Mile Beach in 1956. Vern Morcom – whose experience as course superintendent at Kingston Heath for nearly 40 years and his design work on other courses in the Melbourne Sandbelt – was then commissioned to create a new layout, which would famously host the Australian Open, won by Jack Nicklaus, 15 years later.

There is no mistaking Morcom's touch, with its fairways laid out over slightly undulating sandy land and fairways lined with tall gum trees mixed with thick native shrubs and some pine trees. This not only creates a sense of isolation on many holes but the challenge is to keep your ball on the fairway and out of trouble.

18. MORE TO COME

The future for golf in Tasmania is exciting. The development of Barnbougle Dunes and Lost Farm as well as the new King Island

courses – Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes – has put the Apple Isle on the radar of golf travelers across the globe.

And there are plans to add to this crop of world class layouts.

Work is due to begin in 2016 on Arm End (*pictured*), which is located 40 minutes' drive, and 20 minutes by ferry, from Hobart's CBD.

Arm End is a visually spectacular and dynamic landform surrounded by water with five separate beaches, several kilometres of cliffs and dramatic topography, which will provide a blank canvas for the design team of Neil Crafter and Paul Mogford (Golf Strategies).

Crafter and Mogford have developed the masterplan for a links style course, which will be the centerpiece of a multi-use public reserve open to bike riding, walking, swimming and fishing. When completed, it will be the first fully public golf course in southern Tasmania.

Tour player and proud Tasmanian Mat Goggin is behind a plan to develop a course – to be designed by Ogilvy, Clayton, Cocking and Mead (OCCM) – at Seven Mile Beach, near Hobart airport. The plan is still working through the approval process.



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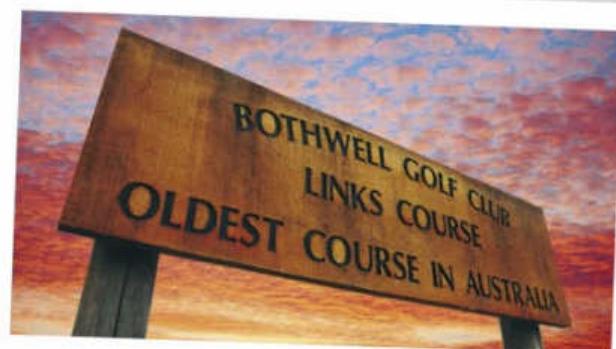
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(03) 6344 1118; www.launcestongolfclub.com.au

3. COUNTRY CLUB TASMANIA

Country Club Dve, Prospect Vale.

(03) 6335 5740; www.countryclubtasmania.com.au

4. DEVONPORT GOLF CLUB

Woodrising Ave, Spreyton.

(03) 6427 2068; www.devonportgolfclub.org.au

5. ULVERSTONE GOLF CLUB

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(03) 6425 2322; www.ulverstonegolfclub.com.au

6. RATHO FARM

Highland Lakes Rd, Bothwell

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7. CLAREMONT GOLF CLUB

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(03) 6249 1180; www.claremontgolf.com.au

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9. ROYAL HOBART GOLF CLUB

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10. KING ISLAND GOLF & BOWLS CLUB

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11. CAPE WICKHAM (pictured below)

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www.bridportaccommodation.com.au

OCEAN DUNES KING ISLAND HOTEL

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www.oceandunes.com.au

SEAVIEW COTTAGES, KING ISLAND

Located on the coast 10 minutes' drive south of Currie, these two fully self-contained cottages offer incredible coastal views and all the facilities you need to relax and rejuvenate during your King Island stay.

www.seaviewcottages.com.au

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Situated on the west coast of King Island, the motel is fully renovated and has ten rooms and four self-contained units. The service is friendly and the beds comfortable to ensure you have a great stay. Golf and other packages available.

www.islandbreezemotel.com.au

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www.boomerangbythesea.com.au



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www.rathofarm.com

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www.vortexair.com.au

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Australian Air Holidays offers tours to King Island as well as a selection of other Tasmanian destinations. They have three-day King Island play and stay packages, with flights operating from Melbourne's Essendon Airport as well as Adelaide Airport, direct to the island.

www.australianairholidays.com/lp/king-island-golf



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National (Lálbato), Golf de Saint Germain, Royal Cinque Ports and Princes Golf Club.

Exclusive to Travelrite International and priced from \$10,295 per person, twin share, this 19-day round trip departs on August 14, 2016, and includes international economy air travel to Amsterdam and return from London, confirmed tee-times on all 11 courses, accommodation with breakfasts plus welcome and farewell dinners.

There's also plenty on offer for non-golfers too, with sightseeing tours of Amsterdam,

Bruges, Le Tourquet, Paris and Canterbury included in the package. A non-golfer discount is also available.

For more information, call Travelrite International on 1800 033 436 or visit www.travelrite.com.au.



The Sir Nick Faldo-designed Laguna Lang Co is a must when in Vietnam.

DISCOVER VIETNAM

Central Vietnam has emerged as one of the 'go-to' golf destinations in recent years with a host of new courses coming into play.

There are now 35 courses in Vietnam, with more than 60 other layouts in various stages of development, especially in Vietnam's coastal areas. Our feature on Vietnam this issue (see page 90) covers some of the best courses you can play right now.

So, how to get there? Vietnam Airlines flies directly to Ho Chi Minh City daily from Sydney and Melbourne, with regular internal flights to Danang and Hanoi. Economy-class fares start from \$990 and business-class tickets from \$3,065. Vietnam Airlines is also a great way to link to other parts of Asia, including Japan, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore and more.

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Black Bull is a new addition to the great Murray River courses.

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There are few more spectacular courses than Old Head on Ireland's south coast.

Incredible IRELAND



Ireland is justifiably famous for a number of things – the people, the scenery and the sights. It's also one of the world's leading destinations for golf.

A golf trip to the Emerald Isle will not only convince you of Ireland's golf pedigree, it will also challenge any perceptions you had about the quality of the great game in Ireland. With more than 400 golf clubs, including a third of the world's natural links courses, and a slew of exceptional championships courses in spectacular locations, it's no wonder that Ireland attracts more than 240,000 golfers from all over the globe every year.

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The Greg Norman-designed Doonbeg is one of Ireland's most highly ranked courses.





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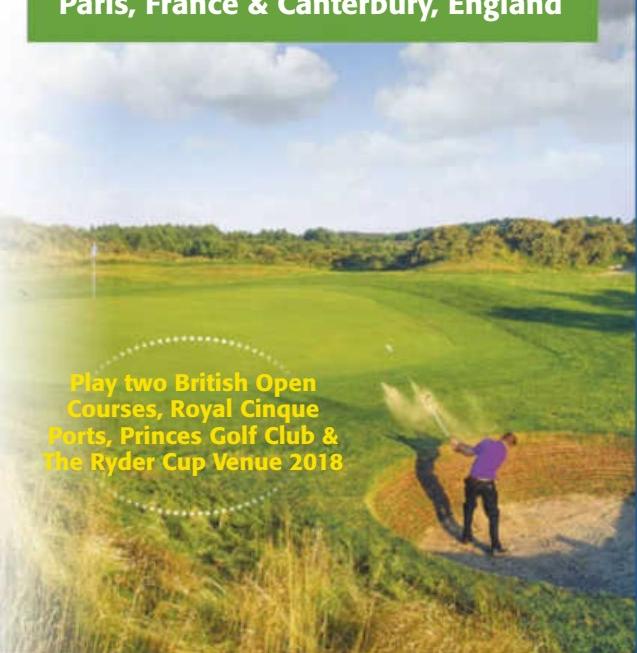
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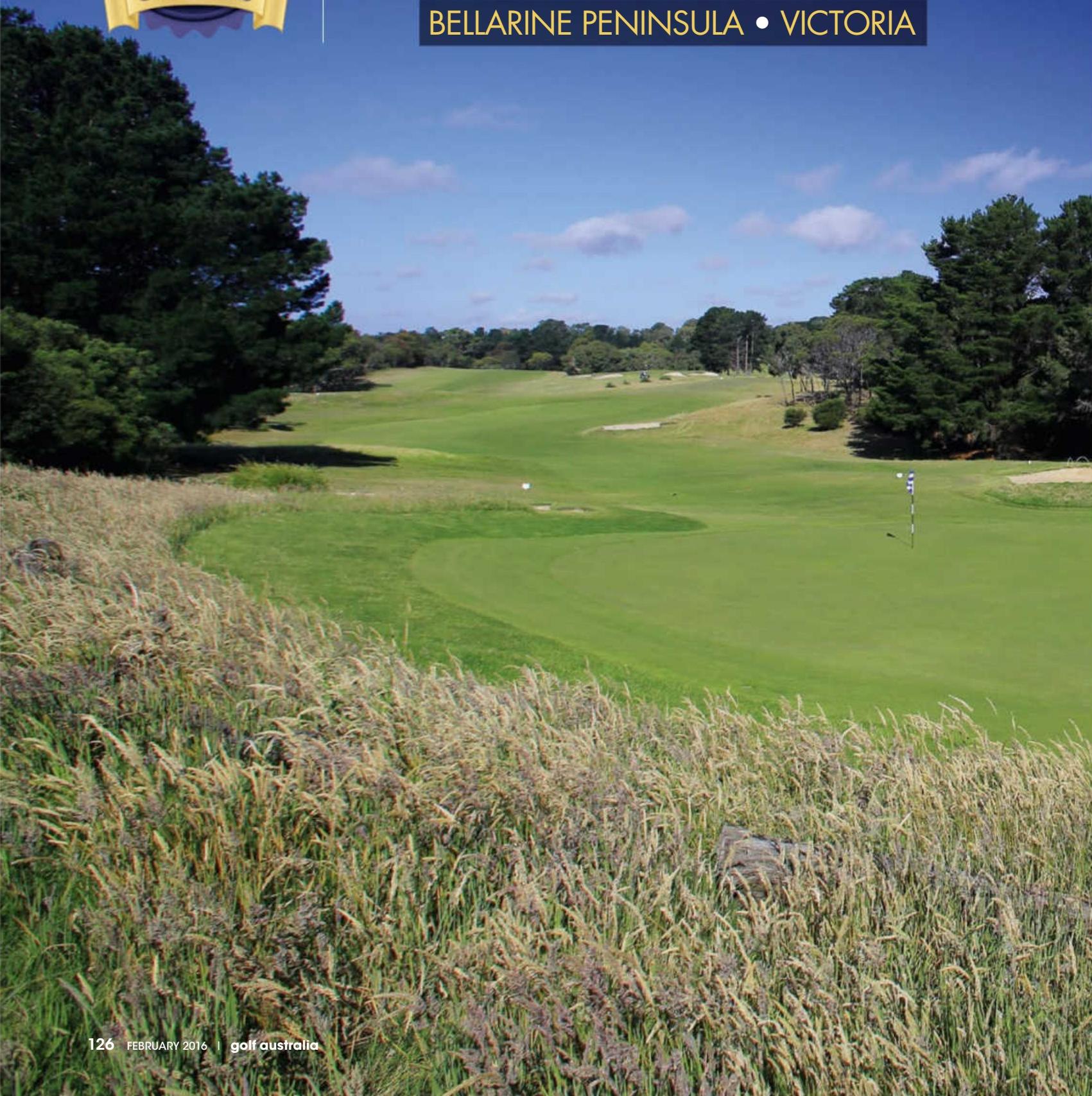
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Long-time Kingston Heath course superintendent and acclaimed architect Vern Morcom was at the height of his design career in the years after World War II when he was commissioned to create an 18-hole layout for the Curlewis Golf Club, which was moving from its original home 15 minutes' drive away in Drysdale.

Rolling, sandy terrain with picturesque views to nearby Corio Bay greeted Morcom and he crafted a superb open layout with

wide fairways, big undulating greens to take into account the wind that is such a strong influence on the courses of the Bellarine.

The first nine holes were ready for play by 1949 but the failure to extract water from a bore on the site and, with no alternative water supply available, the course development was closed and the land leased for grazing. It wasn't until the late 1960s, when a new water source was proposed, that the course was prepared to be re-opened,

which it did in 1971.

Today, the Morcom touch of risk-and-reward design remains and will be familiar to those who have played golf in the Melbourne Sandbelt. This is especially true on the front nine where the routing and design is Morcom's original work.

The opening short par-5 and the two following short par-4s are typical Morcom and wouldn't be out of place on any of the best courses on the Sandbelt.



The dogleg left 9th hole is a terrific risk-and-reward par-4.



The short par-4 3rd hole would not be out of place on the Melbourne Sandbelt.

Players get the chance to start their round in the best possible way – with a birdie – at the short par-5 1st hole. The rolling fairway of the 448-metre hole is laid out before you like a set of waves heading for the beach. The fairway then doglegs right before rising again on its climb to the slightly elevated green. Four bunkers – all short of the green but with two left and another two right – provide a narrow gateway to the putting surface.

The 308-metre 3rd hole is the best of Curlewis' short par-4s. From the tee perched above the fairway, you can see the green as well as all the trouble that can be found en route. Big hitters will also note that they can carry a massive fairway bunker on the right side of the fairway by taking an 'as the crow flies' route to the green. But any aggressive play from the tee is fraught with danger as an out-of-bounds fence is just metres from the left edge of the fairway.

Water was an issue for the club for many years but the installation of a water recycling plant five years ago has certainly elevated the course to a new level of conditioning with sufficient year-round irrigation.

Course architect Kevin Hartley made changes to the layout with a masterplan in the mid-70s. The club then retained the services of designer Mike Clayton in 2001 to oversee further changes to the layout with the addition of bunkering, some green remodelling as well as some subtle tweaks, which have included the realignment of some tees in recent times.

The biggest changes to the club in recent times have been off the course with the sale of the course last July to David and Lyndsay Sharp, who own the nearby Leura Park Estate winery among other businesses. The couple have committed to spend \$1 million on further upgrades to both the clubhouse and course.

Sand and length are the main defences of the long par-3 13th hole.



ADDRESS: 1345 Portarlington Rd, Curlewis.

CONTACT: (03) 5251 2534; www.curlewisgolf.com.au

DESIGNERS: Vern Morcom (1947); Kevin Hartley (1976); Mike Clayton (2001 and ongoing).

GREEN FEES: \$35 (midweek), \$47 (Saturday), \$40 (Sunday & public holiday). Twilight rates from \$27.

GOLF AUSTRALIA TOP-100 COURSES HISTORY: No.88 (2014, debut); No.78 (2016).

RANKING JUDGE'S COMMENTS:

"The water initiatives put in place by the club a few years back are really paying dividends and the quality of the playing surfaces now complement the very good and enjoyable design. I can see Curlewis enjoying an extended period of time in the Top-100."

– Editor Brendan James (2014).

"If Curlewis doesn't offer the best value for money golf in the country I'll give it away. I visited during the week, paid my \$35 and would have gladly parted with more for the experience." – Lucas Andrews (2016).

"This is a fun golf course. There are plenty of opportunities for birdies, but if you get too cocky with your shot choices and don't match them with good execution you will be penalised." – James King (2016).

"The short par-4 3rd hole is a gem that would not be out of place among holes on the Melbourne Sandbelt, while Curlewis' par-3s are memorable for offering a variety of challenges." – Alex Chapman (2016).



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WINNER'S CIRCLE

Jarryd Felton



NSW PGA CHAMPION

WINNING SCORE: 13-under-par, 275

DEFEATED: Defeated James Nitties, Anthony Summers, Matthew Millar, Geoff Drakeford and Rhein Gibson by two strokes.

DEFINING MOMENTS: Starting the final round four shots from the lead, West Australian Jarryd Felton needed to finish strongly to avoid a trip to final stage of Qualifying School. He started well with a birdie at the opening hole, and added two more birdies before the turn. By the time he reached the 17th tee, he was 12-under and leading the tournament. His tee shot at the par-3 finished 20 feet from the cup, and he rolled the putt in for a two-shot buffer walking down the final hole.

WITH THIS VICTORY...

- This was Felton's first professional win in just his fifth start.
- The 20-year-old receives a two-year exemption on the PGA Tour of Australasia. ⚡

“ I'm over the moon. Walking down the last I didn't really know what the situation was but I saw the leaderboard and it was quite overwhelming. ”

– Jarryd Felton



EQUIPMENT CHOICE

| | |
|---------------|--|
| DRIVER | Titleist 915D3 (9.5° loft), with Fujikura Motore VC6.3 TS shaft. |
| 3-WOOD | Titleist 915F (15° loft), with Fujikura Motore VC6.3 TS shaft. |
| UTILITY IRONS | Titleist 716 T-MB (3-, 4-iron). |
| IRONS | Titleist 716 CB (5-iron to pitching wedge). |
| WEDGES | Titleist Vokey TVD prototype (52°, 56° and 60° lofts). |
| PUTTER | Titleist Scotty Cameron Super Rat prototype. |
| BALL | Titleist Pro V1x. |

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